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Illustrated Glossary

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Illustrated Glossary

Geography is important to the national statistical system. Well-defined geographic areas provide the framework for the collection, presentation and analysis of data.

To take full advantage of Census data, users need to have a basic understanding of the terms related to geography concepts. To explore geographical definitions and concepts, use the alphabetical listing or [Figure 1.1 Hierarchy of standard geographic areas for dissemination, 2021 Census](#).



Aggregate dissemination area (ADA)

Definition

An aggregate dissemination area (ADA) is a dissemination geography created for the Census. ADAs cover the entire country and, where possible, have a population between 5,000 and 15,000 based on the previous census population counts. ADAs are created by grouping existing dissemination geographic areas, including census tracts (CTs), census subdivisions (CSDs) or dissemination areas (DAs). ADA boundaries respect provincial, territorial, census division (CD), census metropolitan area (CMA) and census agglomeration (CA) boundaries.

For more information on the [aggregate dissemination area](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Census metropolitan area (CMA) and census agglomeration (CA)

Definition

A census metropolitan area (CMA) or a census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 based on data from the current Census of Population Program, of which 50,000 or more must live in the core based on adjusted data from the previous Census of Population Program. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000 also based on data from the previous Census of Population Program.

To be included in the CMA or CA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by commuting flows derived from data on place of work from the previous Census Program.



For more information on [census metropolitan area and census agglomeration](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.

CMA and CA tutorial

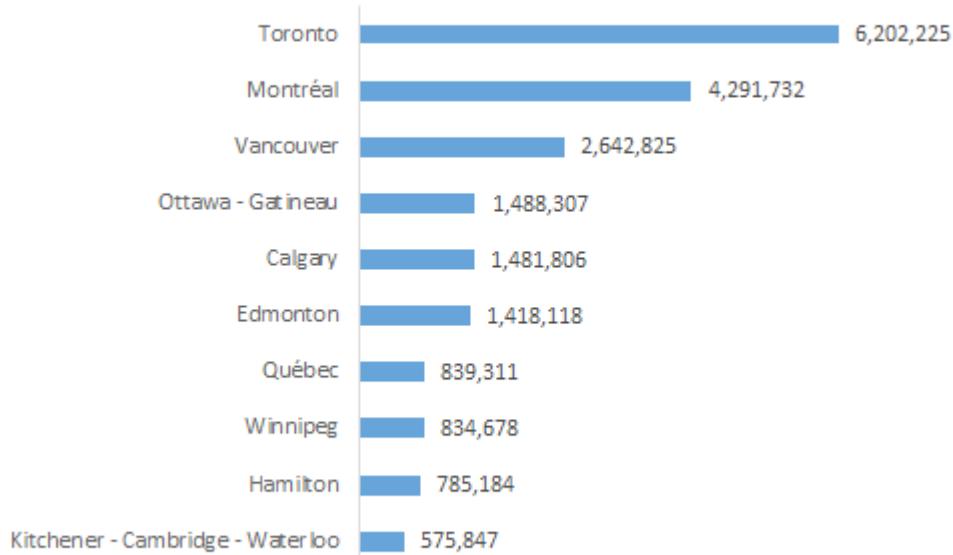
Census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs) are considered to be large, densely populated centres made up of adjacent municipalities that are economically and socially integrated.

According to the 2021 Census, 84% of Canada's population lives within a CMA or CA. This amounts to over 31 million people. More than half of the population, a bit more than 20.5 million people, lives in the ten largest CMAs.



Population of Canada's ten largest census metropolitan areas, 2021 Census

Population of Canada's ten largest census metropolitan areas



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

This chart shows the population of the ten largest census metropolitan areas according to the 2021 Census in descending order (starting with the most populated). The population counts are: 6,202,225 in Toronto (Ont.); 4,291,732 in Montréal (Que.); 2,642,825 in Vancouver (B.C.); 1,488,307 in Ottawa - Gatineau (Ont./Que.); 1,481,806 in Calgary (Alta.); 1,418,118 in Edmonton (Alta.); 839,311 in Québec (Que.); 834,678 in Winnipeg (Man.); 785,184 in Hamilton (Ont.); and 575,847 in Kitchener - Cambridge - Waterloo (Ont.).

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs) are formed of one or more adjacent municipalities that are centred on and have a high degree of integration with a large population centre, known as the core.

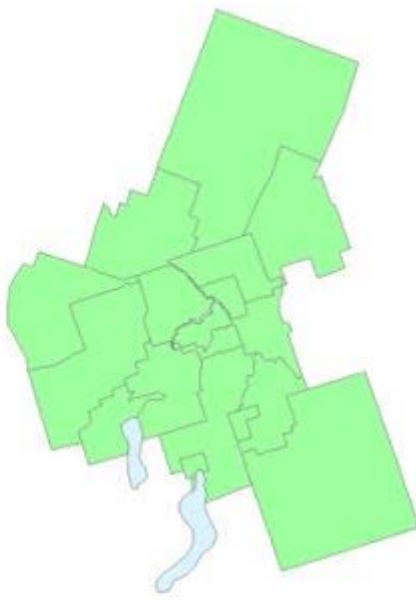
A CMA or CA is delineated using adjacent census subdivisions (CSDs) as building blocks. These CSDs, also known as municipalities, are included in the CMA or CA if they meet at least one of the following rules, which are ranked in order of priority:

1. Delineation core rule
2. Forward commuting flow rule
3. Reverse commuting flow rule
4. Spatial contiguity rule
5. Historical comparability rule
6. Manual adjustments
7. Merging adjacent CMAs and CAs and secondary core rule

The rest of this tutorial illustrates how each of these rules is applied and how CSDs are added to a CMA or CA.



Example of census subdivisions to be evaluated in census metropolitan area and census agglomeration delineation



This map shows an example of census subdivisions to be evaluated in census metropolitan area and census agglomeration delineation.

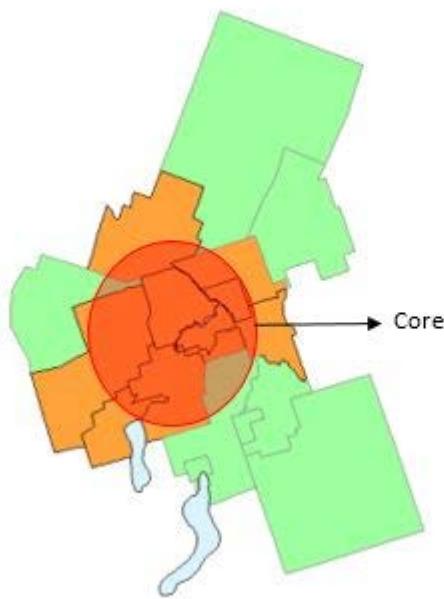
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Delineation core rule

Once a population centre attains a total population of 10,000 people, it is eligible to become the core of a census agglomeration (CA). Once a population centre attains a total population of 50,000 people, then it is eligible to become the core of a census metropolitan area (CMA). The boundaries and population data for the cores that are used to delineate CMAs and CAs are taken from the previous census.

Since CMAs and CAs are based on census subdivisions (CSDs), a 'delineation core' is created from those CSDs that have at least 50% of its population living in the core. These CSDs are used for determining whether other CSDs will be included in the CMA or CA according to the next three rules.



Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule

This map shows an example of a core and census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule.

Note: The population centre does not automatically become the core of a CMA when it reaches a population of 50,000 (based on the previous census counts). A CMA must also have a total population of at least 100,000 based on the counts of the current census. At the end of the delineation, if the total population of all the CSDs included in a CA does not reach 100,000, it remains a CA regardless of the population of its core.

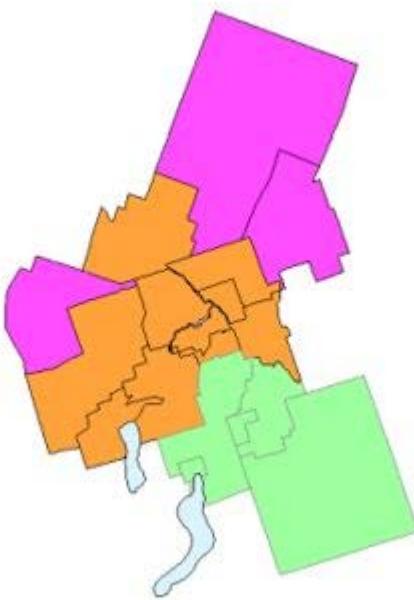
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Forward commuting flow rule

Using commuting data based on the place of work question from the previous Census Program, commuting flows are calculated for workers going to the delineation core. If a surrounding census division (CSD) has a minimum of 100 commuters going into the delineation core and at least 50% of the employed labour force **living** in the CSD **works** at a fixed workplace address in the delineation core, then the CSD is included in the census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA).



Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the forward commuting flow rule



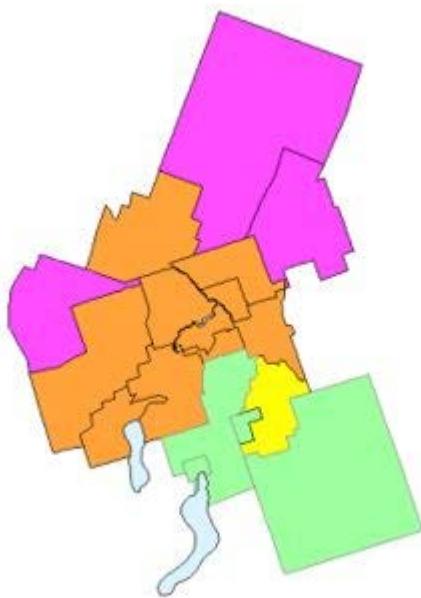
This map shows an example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule and the forward commuting flow rule.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Reverse commuting flow rule

Commuting flows are also calculated for workers leaving the delineation core. If the delineation core has a minimum of 100 commuters going out to a surrounding census subdivision (CSD) and at least 50% of the employed labour force **working** at a fixed workplace address in a surrounding CSD **lives** in the delineation core then, that CSD is included in the census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA).



Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the reverse commuting flow rule

This map shows an example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule, the forward commuting flow rule and the reverse commuting flow rule.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Spatial contiguity rule

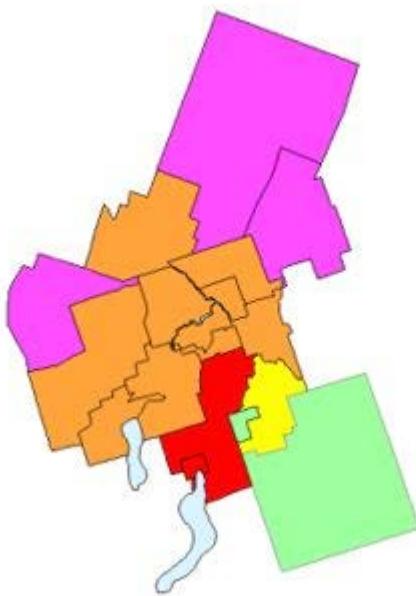
Two situations can lead to the inclusion or exclusion of a census subdivision (CSD) in a census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA) for reasons of spatial contiguity. Specifically, these are:

‘CSD Outlier’ – A CSD is adjacent to a CMA or CA but does not have sufficient commuting flows (either forward or reverse) to be part of the CMA or CA. However, this CSD contains another, smaller, CSD that has sufficient commuting flows to or from the delineation core to be included in the CMA or CA.

‘CSD Hole’ – A CSD is adjacent to a CMA or CA and has sufficient commuting flows (either forward or reverse) to be part of the CMA or CA. However, this CSD contains another, smaller, CSD that does not have sufficient commuting flows to or from the delineation core to be included in the CMA or CA.

When either of these situations arises, the CSD that is adjacent to the CMA or CA is grouped with its outliers or its holes to create a ‘minimum CSD set.’ The commuting flows for the minimum CSD set, as a whole, are calculated. If the commuting flows of the minimum CSD set meets either of the commuting flow rules, then all of CSDs in the set are included in the CMA or CA.



Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the spatial contiguity rule

This map shows an example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule, the forward commuting flow rule, the reverse commuting flow rule and the spatial contiguity rule.

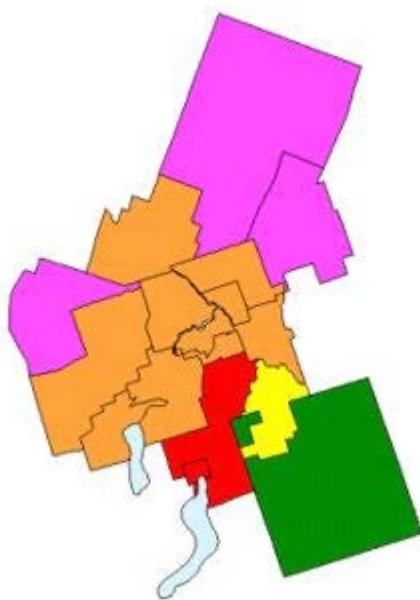
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Historical comparability rule

To maintain historical comparability for census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and larger census agglomerations (CAs) (those with census tracts in the previous census), census subdivisions (CSDs) are usually retained in the CMA or larger CA even if their commuting flow percentages falls below the commuting flow thresholds. If a CSD has had boundary changes since the last census, then the commuting flow data for that CSD are recalculated and a decision to include or exclude the CSD is made according to the previous rules.



Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the historical comparability rule



This map shows an example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule, the forward commuting flow rule, the reverse commuting flow rule, the spatial contiguity rule and the historical comparability rule.

Manual adjustments rule

A census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA) represents an area that is economically and socially integrated. However, there are certain limitations to the extent by which this ideal can be met. Since the census subdivisions (CSDs) that are used as building blocks in CMA and CA delineation are administrative units, their boundaries do not always match other statistical units (i.e., population centre cores). There can be situations where the application of the above rules create undesirable outcomes, or where the rules cannot be easily applied. In these circumstances, a manual override is sometimes applied to ensure that the integrity of the program is retained.

Merging adjacent CMAs and CAs and secondary core rule

Using place of work data from the previous Census Program, commuting flows are calculated for census agglomerations (CAs) and census metropolitan areas (CMAs) that are adjacent to one another. A CA can be merged with an adjacent CMA if the total percentage commuting interchange between the CA and CMA is equal to at least 35% of the employed labour force living in the CA. The total percentage commuting interchange is the sum of the commuting flow in both directions between the CMA and the CA as a percentage of the labour force living in the CA and working at a fixed workplace address.

$$\frac{\text{Total resident employed labour force living in the CA and working in the CMA} + \text{Total resident employed labour force living in the CMA and working in the CA}}{\text{Resident employed labour force of the CA}} \times 100\%$$

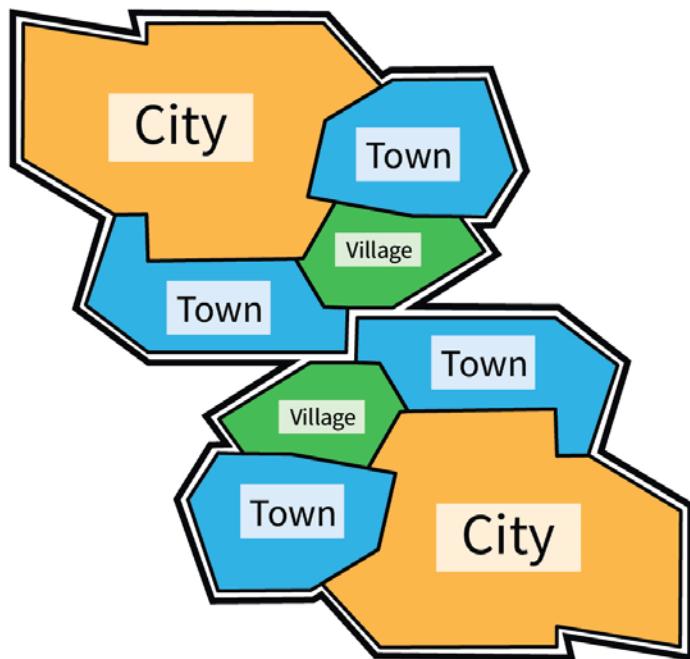
If more than one CA is adjacent to the same CMA, each CA is assessed separately with the CMA. Several CAs may be merged with one CMA. After a CA is merged with a CMA, the core of the former CA is called the secondary core of the CMA.



Census agricultural region (CAR)

Definition

Census agricultural regions (CARs) are composed of groups of adjacent census divisions.



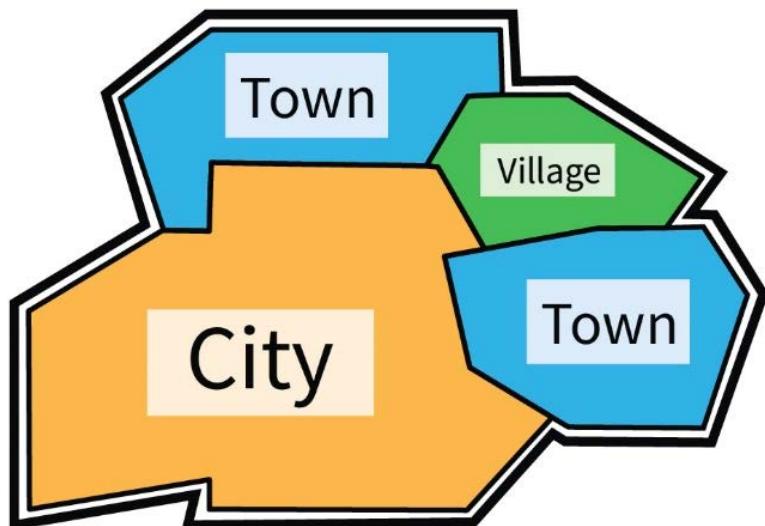
For more information on [census agricultural region](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Census division (CD)

Definition

Group of neighboring municipalities joined together for the purposes of regional planning and managing common services (such as police or ambulance services). These groupings are established under laws in effect in certain provinces of Canada. Census division (CD) is the general term for provincially legislated areas (such as county, *municipalité régionale de comté* (MRC) and regional district) or their equivalents. In other provinces and the territories where laws do not provide for such areas, Statistics Canada defines equivalent areas for statistical reporting purposes in cooperation with these provinces and territories. Census divisions are intermediate geographic areas between the province/territory level and the municipality (census subdivision).



For more information on [census division](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.

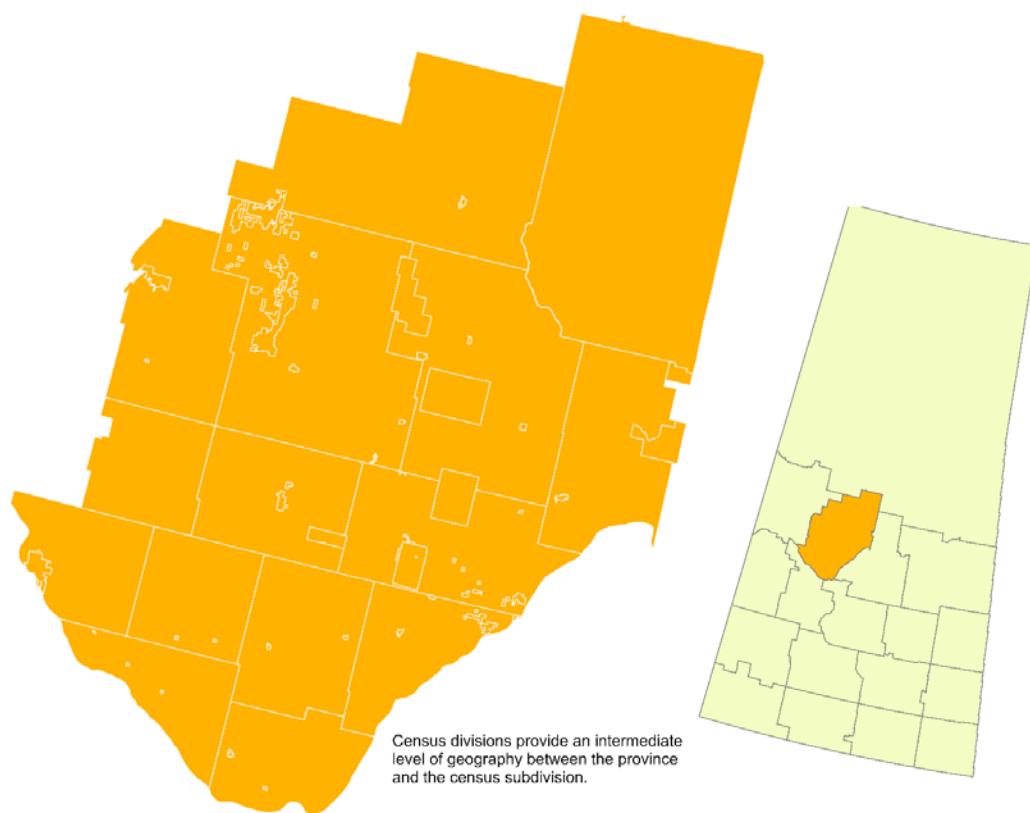
Census division tutorial

Census divisions (CD) have been established in provincial law to facilitate regional planning, as well as the provision of services that can be more effectively delivered on a scale larger than a municipality.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, provincial or territorial law does not provide for these administrative geographic areas. Therefore, Statistics Canada, in cooperation with these provinces and territories, has created equivalent areas called census divisions (CDs) for the purpose of disseminating statistical data.



Census divisions provide an intermediate level of geography between the province and the census subdivision



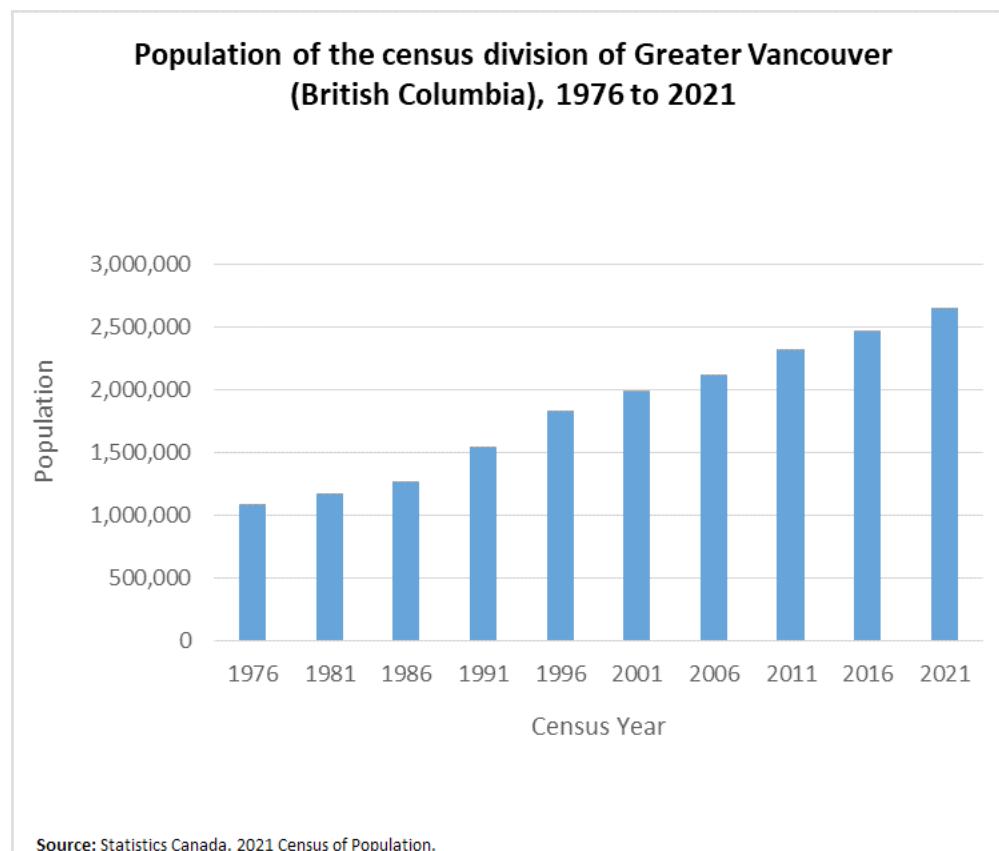
This map shows a close up view of one census division in Saskatchewan (Division No. 16) and its component census subdivisions to illustrate that census divisions provide an intermediate level of geography between the province and the census subdivision.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

Next to provinces and territories, census divisions are the most stable administrative geographic areas, and are therefore often used in longitudinal analysis. By using the census division code, which is based on the Standard Geographical Classification (SGC), users can track changes of a given census division over time.

In British Columbia, for example, the census division code '59 15' represents the census division of Greater Vancouver. The graph below shows the population trend in this census division over the past 45 years.



Population of the census division of Greater Vancouver (British Columbia), 1976 to 2021

This chart shows the population change in the census division of Greater Vancouver, (British Columbia) over the last 45 years, from 1976 to 2021. The population counts are: 1,085,242 in 1976; 1,169,831 in 1981; 1,266,152 in 1986; 1,542,744 in 1991; 1,831,665 in 1996; 1,986,965 in 2001; 2,116,581 in 2006; 2,313,328 in 2011; 2,463,431 in 2016 and 2,642,825 in 2021.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.



Census metropolitan area (CMA) and census agglomeration (CA)

Definition

A census metropolitan area (CMA) or a census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 based on data from the current Census of Population Program, of which 50,000 or more must live in the core based on adjusted data from the previous Census of Population Program. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000 also based on data from the previous Census of Population Program.

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CMA and CA tutorial

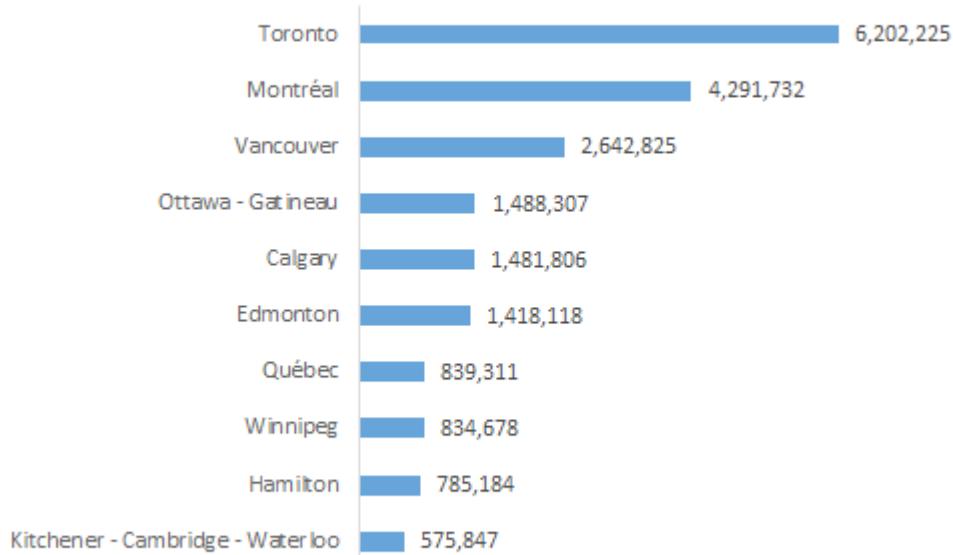
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Population of Canada's ten largest census metropolitan areas, 2021 Census

Population of Canada's ten largest census metropolitan areas



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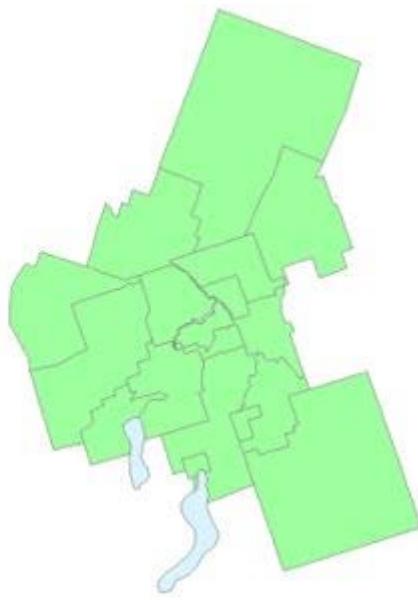
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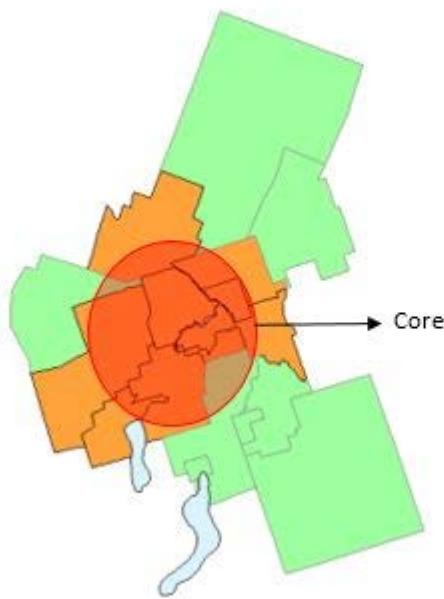
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Delineation core rule

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Since CMAs and CAs are based on census subdivisions (CSDs), a ‘delineation core’ is created from those CSDs that have at least 50% of its population living in the core. These CSDs are used for determining whether other CSDs will be included in the CMA or CA according to the next three rules.



Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule

This map shows an example of a core and census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule.

Note: The population centre does not automatically become the core of a CMA when it reaches a population of 50,000 (based on the previous census counts). A CMA must also have a total population of at least 100,000 based on the counts of the current census. At the end of the delineation, if the total population of all the CSDs included in a CA does not reach 100,000, it remains a CA regardless of the population of its core.

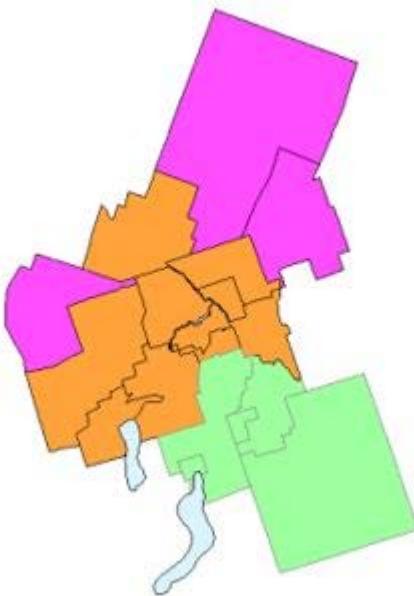
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Forward commuting flow rule

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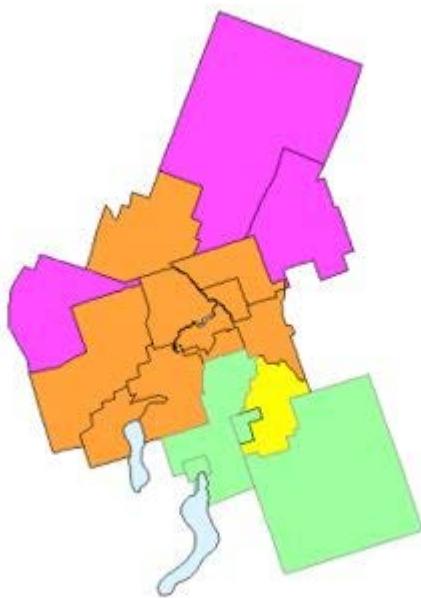
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Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Reverse commuting flow rule

Commuting flows are also calculated for workers leaving the delineation core. If the delineation core has a minimum of 100 commuters going out to a surrounding census subdivision (CSD) and at least 50% of the employed labour force **working** at a fixed workplace address in a surrounding CSD **lives** in the delineation core then, that CSD is included in the census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA).



Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the reverse commuting flow rule

This map shows an example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule, the forward commuting flow rule and the reverse commuting flow rule.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Spatial contiguity rule

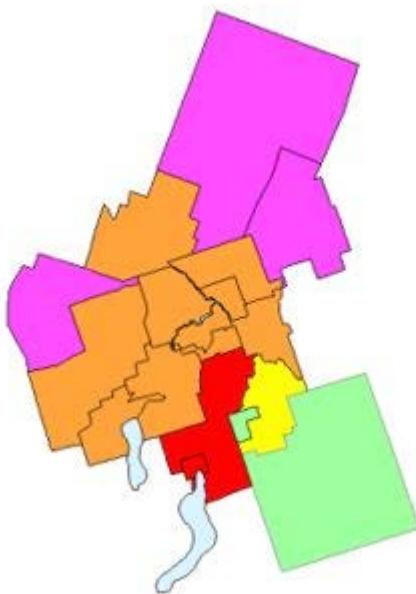
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Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the spatial contiguity rule

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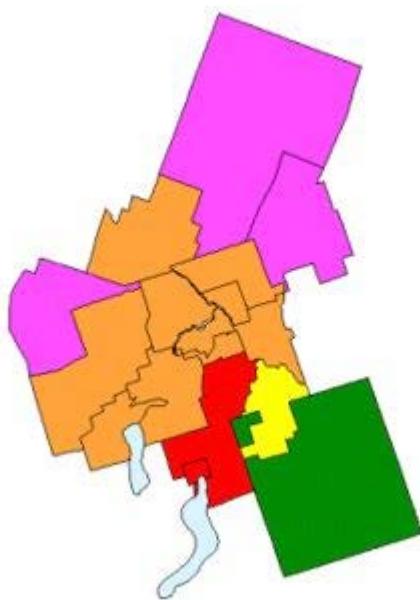
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Historical comparability rule

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Example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the historical comparability rule



This map shows an example of census subdivisions added to a census metropolitan area or census agglomeration due to the delineation core rule, the forward commuting flow rule, the reverse commuting flow rule, the spatial contiguity rule and the historical comparability rule.

Manual adjustments rule

A census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA) represents an area that is economically and socially integrated. However, there are certain limitations to the extent by which this ideal can be met. Since the census subdivisions (CSDs) that are used as building blocks in CMA and CA delineation are administrative units, their boundaries do not always match other statistical units (i.e., population centre cores). There can be situations where the application of the above rules create undesirable outcomes, or where the rules cannot be easily applied. In these circumstances, a manual override is sometimes applied to ensure that the integrity of the program is retained.

Merging adjacent CMAs and CAs and secondary core rule

Using place of work data from the previous Census Program, commuting flows are calculated for census agglomerations (CAs) and census metropolitan areas (CMAs) that are adjacent to one another. A CA can be merged with an adjacent CMA if the total percentage commuting interchange between the CA and CMA is equal to at least 35% of the employed labour force living in the CA. The total percentage commuting interchange is the sum of the commuting flow in both directions between the CMA and the CA as a percentage of the labour force living in the CA and working at a fixed workplace address.

$$\frac{\text{Total resident employed labour force living in the CA and working in the CMA} + \text{Total resident employed labour force living in the CMA and working in the CA}}{\text{Resident employed labour force of the CA}} \times 100\%$$

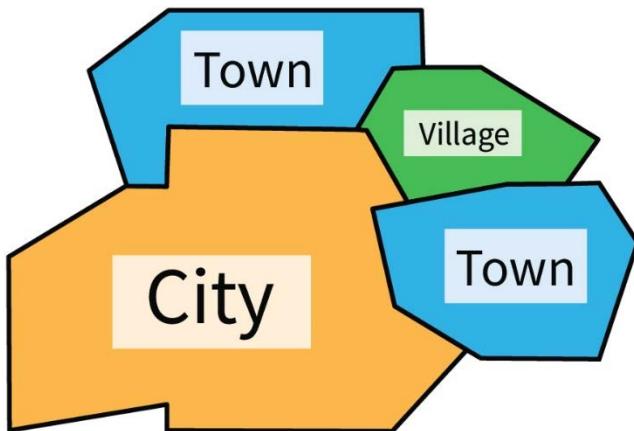
If more than one CA is adjacent to the same CMA, each CA is assessed separately with the CMA. Several CAs may be merged with one CMA. After a CA is merged with a CMA, the core of the former CA is called the secondary core of the CMA.



Census subdivision (CSD)

Definition

Census subdivision (CSD) is the general term for municipalities (as determined by provincial/territorial legislation) or areas treated as municipal equivalents for statistical purposes (e.g., Indian reserves, Indian settlements and unorganized territories). Municipal status is defined by laws in effect in each province and territory in Canada.



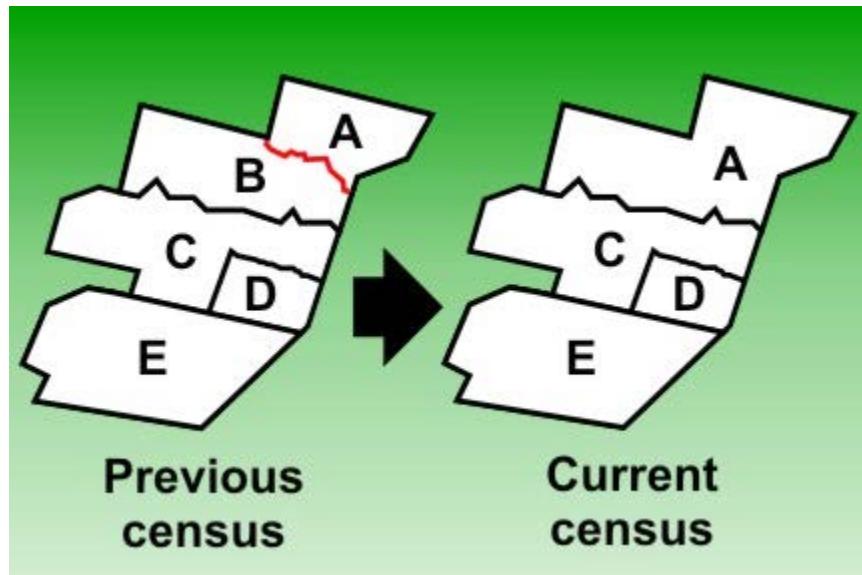
For more information on the [census subdivision](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Census subdivision - previous census

Definition

'Census subdivision – previous census' refers to the census subdivisions (CSDs) as of January 1, 2016, (the geographic reference date for the 2016 Census). A "best fit" linkage is established between dissemination blocks for the 2021 Census and CSDs (municipalities) for the 2016 Census. This linkage ensures that data from the current census can be tabulated for the CSDs from the previous census.



For more information on [census subdivision – previous census](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Census tract (CT)

Definition

Census tracts (CTs) are small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population of fewer than 7,500 persons, based on data from the previous Census of Population Program. They are located in census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and in census agglomerations (CAs) that had a core population of 50,000 or more in the previous census.



For more information on [census tract](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.

CT tutorial

Census tracts (CT) are small geographic units created in all census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and in those census agglomerations (CAs) with a core population of 50,000 or more in the previous census. They provide a level of geography between the CMA or CA and the dissemination area that allows for more detailed economic and social analysis.

Census tract boundaries are created by a committee of local specialists (for example, municipal planners and others) in cooperation with Statistics Canada.

According to the 2021 Census, there are a total of 6,247 census tracts in all 41 CMAs and 914 of the 111 CAs.

Census tracts (CTs) are created using adjacent dissemination blocks (DBs) as building blocks. The rest of this tutorial illustrates the six main rules that must be followed when delineating CT boundaries.

Rule 1: Census tract boundaries must follow permanent and easily recognizable physical features.

Rule 2: Starting with the 2016 Census, CT boundaries must follow the boundaries of the Census subdivision types associated with 'on reserve' population.

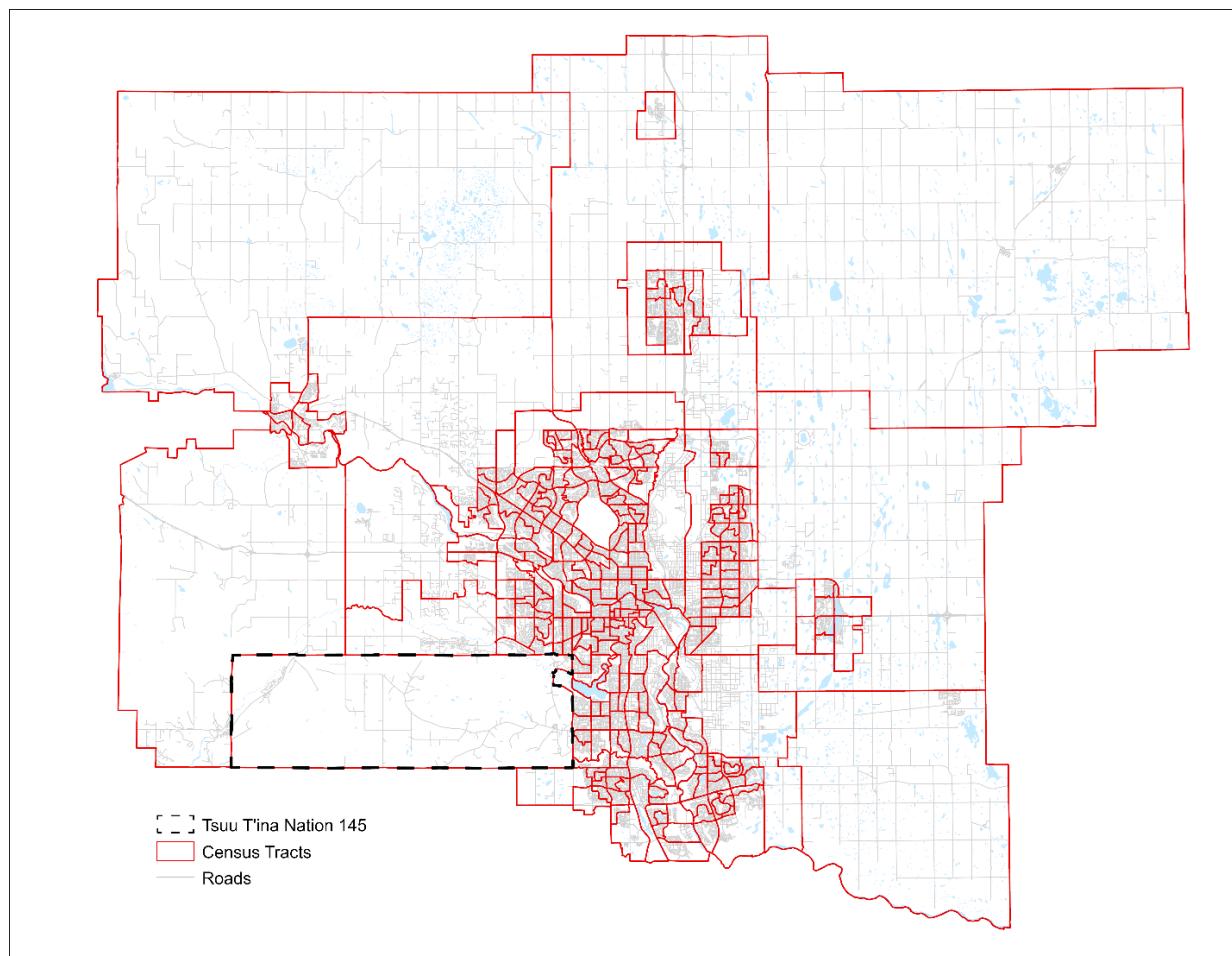
Rule 3: The population of a CT usually range between 2,500 and 7,500 persons, based on data from the previous Census of Population Program. CTs on reserves, in the central business district, in major commercial and industrial zones, or in peripheral areas can have populations outside this range.

These first three rules are demonstrated in this map of the Calgary (Alberta) census metropolitan area (CMA). Firstly, the CT boundaries clearly follow rivers and roads within the CMA limits. Secondly, the Indian reserve (IRI), Tsuu T'ina Nation 145 (Sarcee 145), respects the limits of the CT. Thirdly, since the size of a CT is based on its



population rather than on its land area, those CTs that are in more densely populated areas are generally smaller than those in more sparsely populated areas.

Census tracts in the census metropolitan area of Calgary (Alberta), 2021 Census



This map shows the census tract boundaries in the census metropolitan area of Calgary (Alberta).

Firstly, census tract boundaries can be seen to follow physical features such as roads and rivers. Secondly, the Indian reserve (IRI), Tsuu T'ina Nation 145 (Sarcee 145), respects the limits of the census tract. Thirdly, census tracts are smaller in the more densely populated areas than in the rural, more sparsely populated areas.

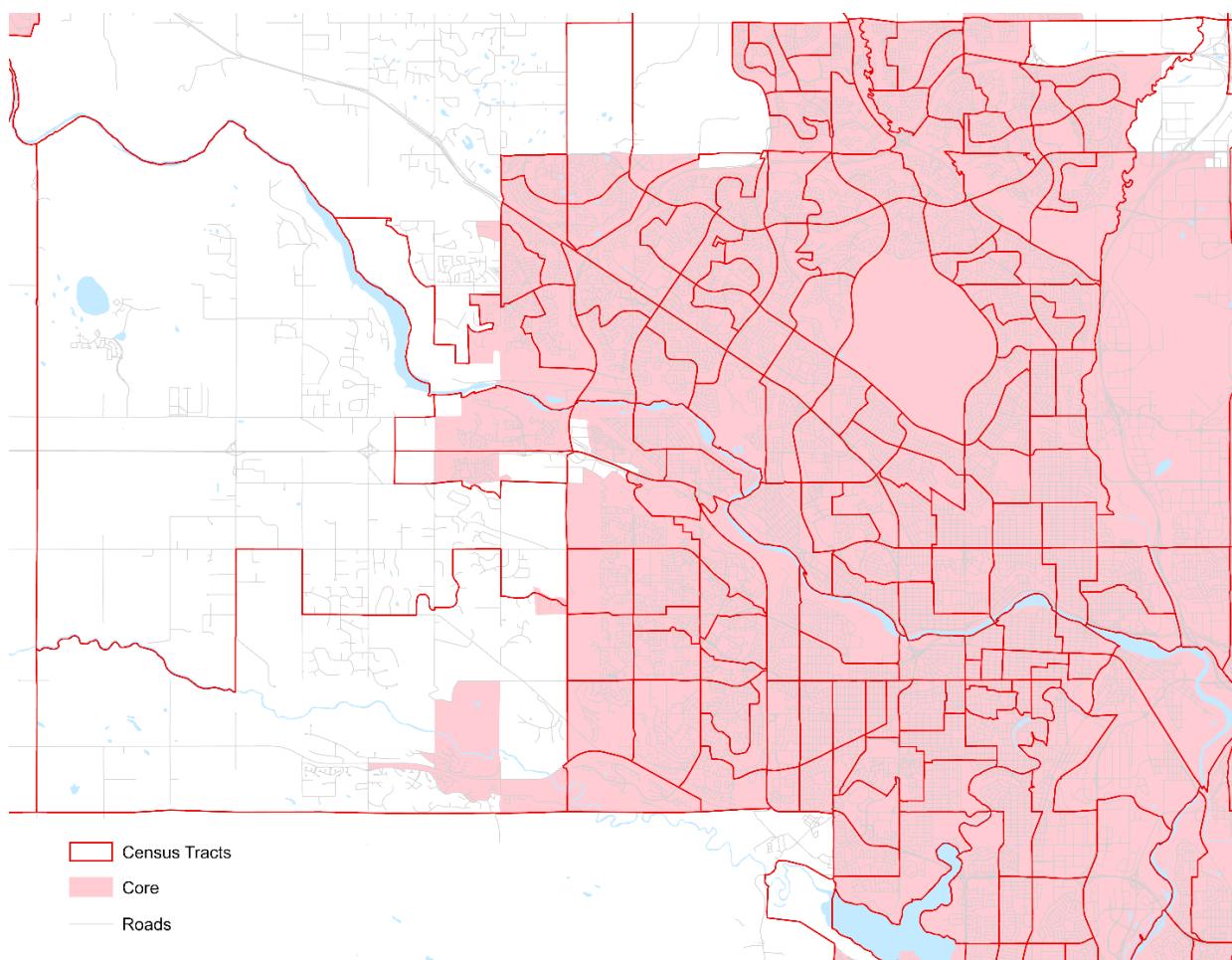
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Rule 4: Census tracts (CTs) should be as homogeneous as possible in terms of socioeconomic characteristics, such as similar economic status and social living conditions at the time of its creation.

Rule 5: The shape of CTs should be as compact as possible.

This map shows selected census tract boundaries in the core of the Victoria (British Columbia) census metropolitan area. The census tracts displayed are in the more densely populated area of the core and are, therefore, more compact than those found in the periphery.



Selected census tracts in the core of the Calgary (Alberta) census metropolitan area, 2021 Census

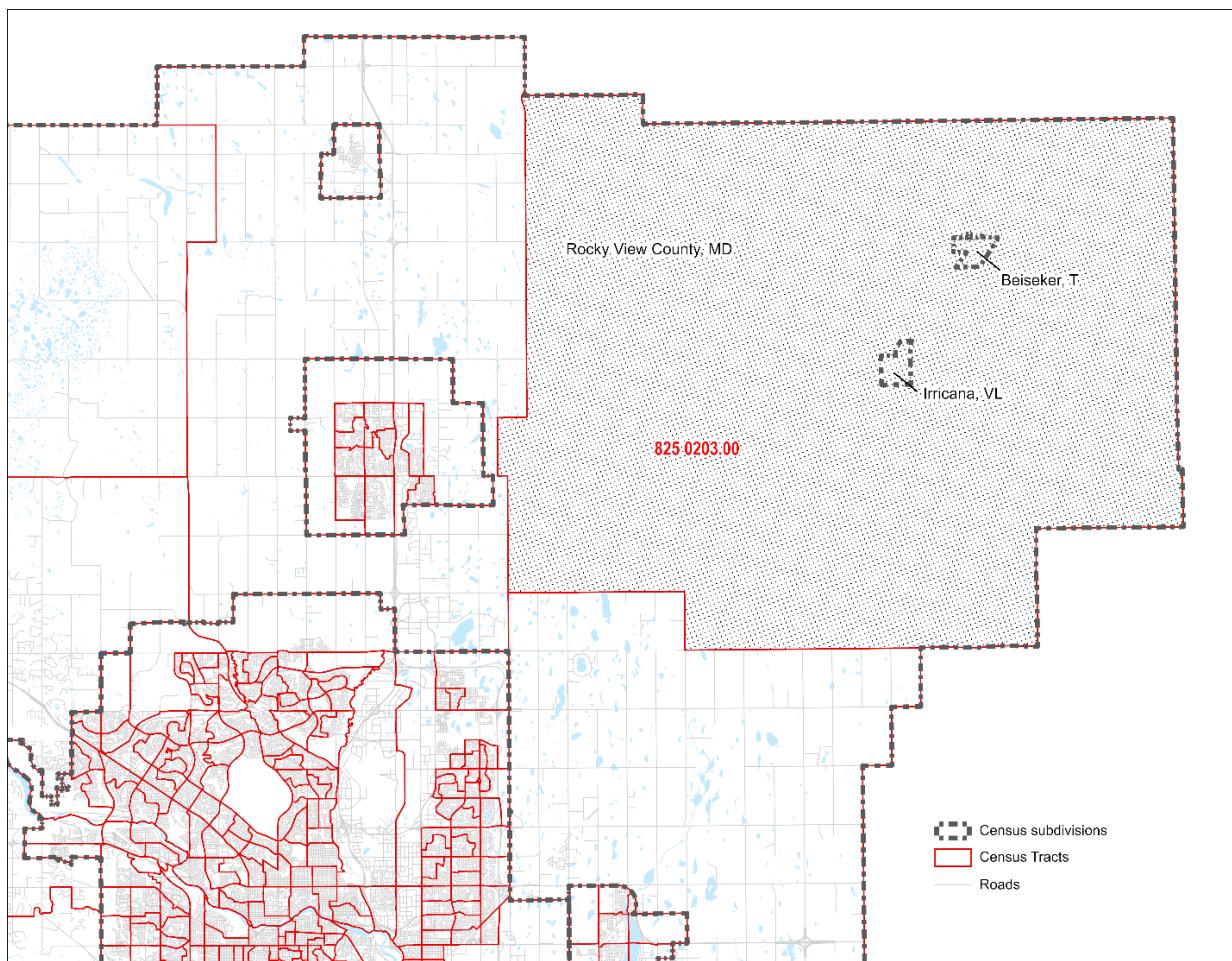
This map shows selected census tract boundaries in the core of the Calgary (Alberta) census metropolitan area. The census tracts displayed are in the more densely populated area of the core and are, therefore, more compact than those found in the periphery.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Rule 6: Census tract (CT) boundaries respect aggregate dissemination area, census metropolitan area, census agglomeration and provincial boundaries, but do not necessarily respect census subdivision (municipality) boundaries.

Census tract boundaries are relatively stable and can be used for data analysis and the study of trends over time.



Census tract 825 0203.03 in the Calgary (Alberta) census metropolitan area, 2021 Census

This map shows that CT 825 0203.03 in the Calgary (Alberta) census metropolitan area encompasses all or part of three census subdivisions: Calgary (CY), Rocky View County (MD) and Chestermere (CY).

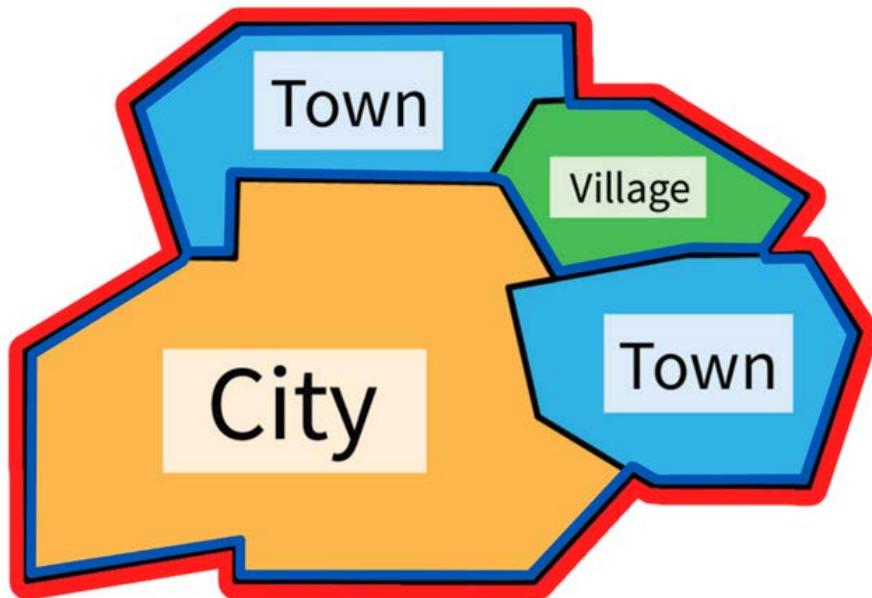
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.



Census consolidated subdivision (CCS)

Definition

A census consolidated subdivision (CCS) is a group of adjacent census subdivisions within the same census division. Generally, the smaller, more densely-populated census subdivisions (towns, villages, etc.) are combined with the surrounding, larger, more rural census subdivision, in order to create a geographic level between the census subdivision and the census division.



For more information on [census consolidated subdivision](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Core, fringe and rural area

Definition

The terms “core”, “fringe” and “rural area” distinguish between population centres (POPCTR) and rural areas (RA) within a census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA).

A CMA or CA can have two types of cores: the core and the secondary core. The core is the population centre (POPCTR) with the highest population, around which a CMA or CA is delineated. The boundaries and population counts of the population centres (core) used to delineate the CMAs or CAs are taken from the current census. The core must have a population of at least 50,000 persons in the case of a CMA or at least 10,000 persons in the case of a CA.

The secondary core is a population centre with at least 10,000 persons (based on the current census) and that is within a CMA or CA but outside the main municipality (census subdivision) that contains the core. The secondary core can also be the core of a CA that has been merged with an adjacent CMA.

The term “fringe” is applied to all population centres (POPCTRs) within a CMA or CA that have less than 10,000 persons (based on the current census) and are not contiguous to a core or a secondary core. In some circumstances, POPCTRs that have 10,000 or more persons (based on the previous census) are designated “fringe”. These are POPCTRs that exist inside census subdivisions (CSDs) that are already contiguous with a core or a secondary core. All territory within a CMA or CA that is not classified as a core or fringe is classified as a “rural area”.



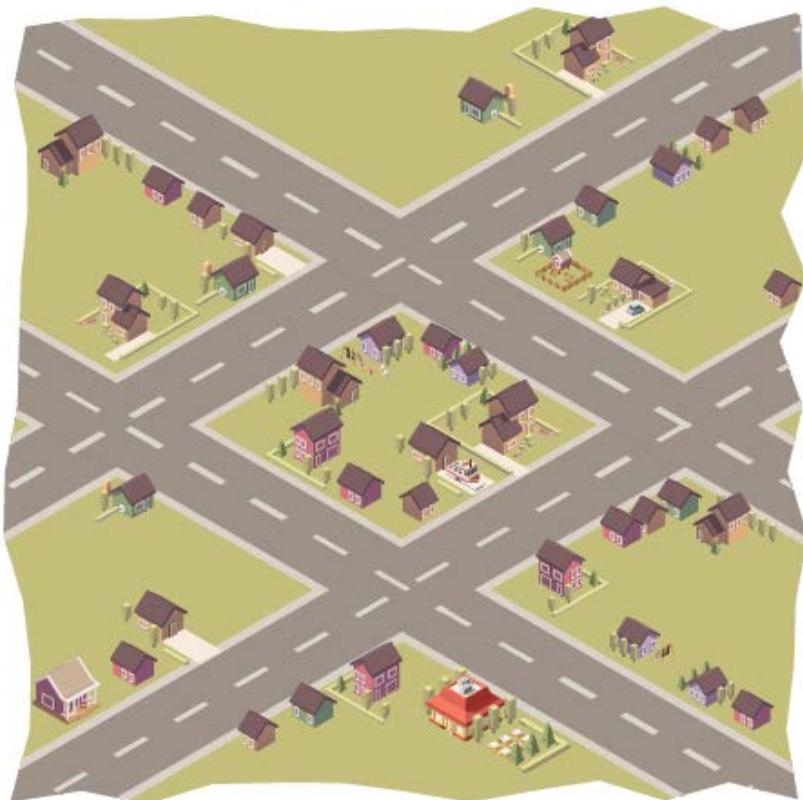
For more information on [core, fringe and rural area](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Designated place (DPL)

Definition

Usually a small community that does not meet the criteria used to define municipalities or population centres (areas with a population of at least 1,000 and a density of 400 persons per square kilometre). Designated places are created by provinces and territories, in cooperation with Statistics Canada, to provide data for submunicipal areas.



For more information on [designated place](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Dissemination area (DA)

Definition

A dissemination area (DA) is a small, relatively stable geographic unit composed of one or more adjacent dissemination blocks with an average population of 400 to 700 persons based on data from the previous Census of Population Program. It is the smallest standard geographic area for which all census data are disseminated. DAs cover all the territory of Canada.



For more information on [dissemination area](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Dissemination block (DB)

Definition

A dissemination block (DB) is an area bounded on all sides by roads and/or boundaries of Statistics Canada's standard geographic areas for dissemination. The dissemination block is the smallest geographic area for which population and dwelling counts are disseminated. Dissemination blocks cover all the territory of Canada.



For more information on [dissemination block](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Economic region (ER)

Definition

An economic region (ER) is a grouping of complete census divisions (CDs), with one exception in Ontario, created as a standard geographic unit for analysis of regional economic activity.



For more information on [economic region](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Federal electoral district (FED)

Definition

A federal electoral district (FED) is an area represented by a member of the House of Commons. The federal electoral district boundaries used for the 2021 Census are based on the 2013 Representation Order.



For more information on [federal electoral district](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Geographical region of Canada

Definition

The geographical regions of Canada are groupings of provinces and territories established for the purpose of statistical reporting. The six geographical regions of Canada are:

- Atlantic
- Quebec
- Ontario
- Prairies
- British Columbia
- Territories



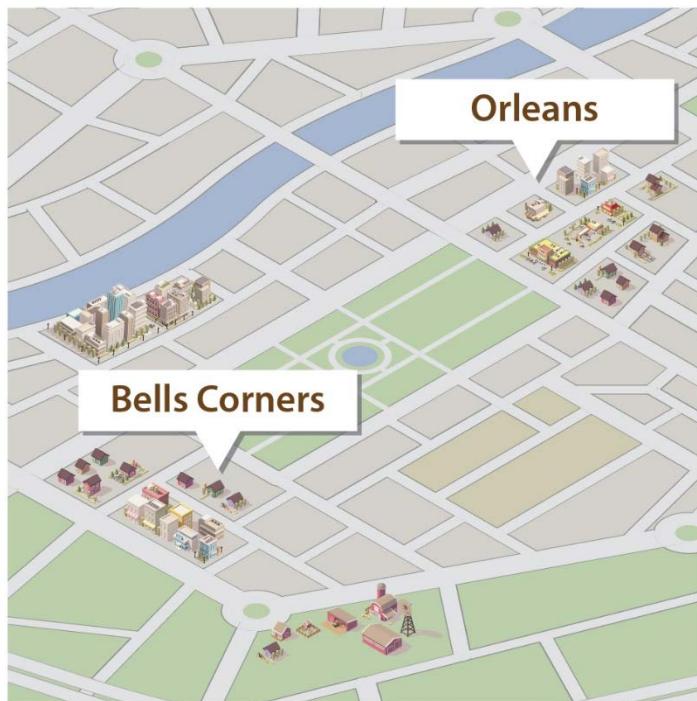
For more information on the [geographical region of Canada](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Place name (PN)

Definition

'Place name' refers to selected names of active and retired geographic areas, as well as names from the Canadian Geographical Names Database. Place names also include names of census subdivisions (municipalities), census divisions, designated places, population centres, provinces, federal electoral districts, economic regions and census metropolitan areas, as well as the names of some local places. There can be duplicate place names; however, the place name point coordinates have been offset for cartographic display purposes.



For more information on [place name](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Population centre (POPCTR)

Definition

A population centre (POPCTR) has a population of at least 1,000 and a population density of 400 persons or more per square kilometre, based on population counts from the current Census of Population. All areas outside population centres are classified as rural areas. Taken together, population centres and rural areas cover all of Canada.

Population centres are classified into three groups, depending on the size of their population:

- small population centres, with a population between 1,000 and 29,999
- medium population centres, with a population between 30,000 and 99,999
- large urban population centres, with a population of 100,000 or more.



For the 2016 Census, population centres (POPCTR) were rebased using a revised set of criteria. This rebase allowed the addition of new delineation thresholds, the inclusion of new data sets, and removal of certain constraints limiting spatial overlap with other administrative geographies.

For more information on [population centre](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Province or territory

Definition

'Province' and 'territory' refer to the major political units of Canada. Canada is divided into 10 provinces and 3 territories. From a statistical point of view, province and territory are basic areas for which data are tabulated.



For more information on [province or territory](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Rural area (RA)

Definition

Rural areas (RAs) include all territory lying outside population centres (POPCTRs). Taken together, population centres and rural areas cover all of Canada.

Rural population includes all population living in rural areas of census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs), as well as population living in rural areas outside CMAs and CAs.



For more information on [rural area](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Abbreviations

Table - List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
ADA	Aggregate dissemination areas
BF	Blockface
CA	Census agglomeration
CAR	Census agricultural region
CBF	Cartographic boundary files
CCS	Census consolidated subdivision
CD	Census division
CMA	Census metropolitan area
CSD	Census subdivision
CT	Census tract
DA	Dissemination area
DB	Dissemination block
DBF	Digital boundary files
DPL	Designated place
ER	Economic region
FED	Federal electoral district
MIZ	Census metropolitan influenced zones
NGD	National Geographic Database
PN	Place name
POPCTR	Population centre
RA	Rural area
RNF	Road network files
SAC	Statistical Area Classification
SDI	Spatial Data Infrastructure
SGC	Standard Geographical Classification



Administrative areas

Definition

Administrative areas are defined, with a few exceptions, by federal and provincial laws and are adopted by Statistics Canada to support the collection and dissemination of data. Administrative areas supported by Statistics Canada include:

- [Province and territory](#)
- [Federal electoral district](#)
- [Census division](#)
- [Census subdivision](#)
- [Designated place](#)
- [Postal code^{OM}](#)

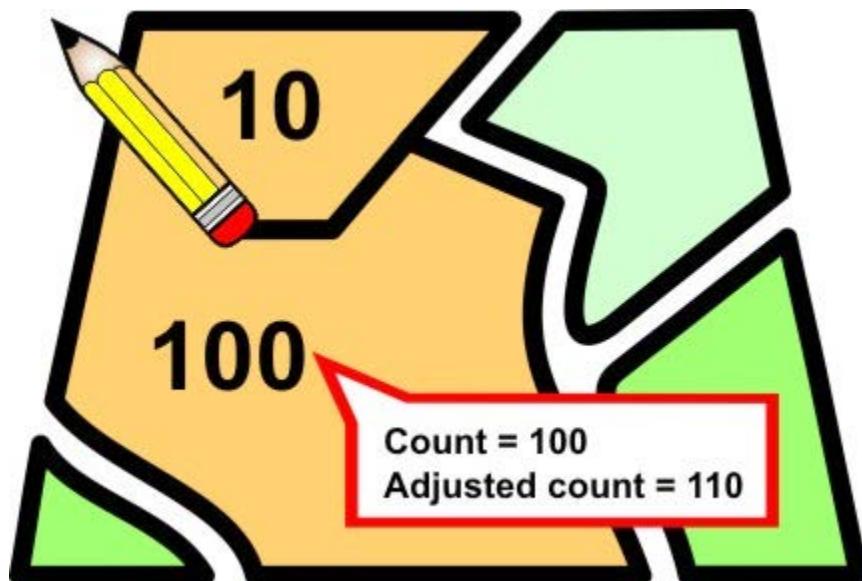
For more information on each of the administrative areas described above, consult the related definitions as well as the definition from the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#).



Adjusted counts

Definition

Over the course of the five-year census cycle, the boundaries that define the geographic areas maintained at Statistics Canada for collecting and disseminating data can change for various reasons. For example, legislation is published to enact a change to the boundary shared between two municipalities. Such a municipal boundary change is then reflected in Statistics Canada's census subdivision (CSD) geography, which then results in the update of boundaries that must respect the CSD, such as the census tract (CT) or dissemination area (DA). When a boundary change occurs, the previous census population and dwelling counts associated with the affected geographic areas are adjusted (revised) to reflect the updated total number of persons and dwellings from the previous census to the current census boundaries.



For more information on [adjusted counts](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Blockface

Definition

A blockface represents one side of a street between two consecutive features intersecting that street. The features can be other streets or boundaries of standard geographic areas. Blockfaces are used for generating blockface representative points, which in turn are used for geocoding and census data extraction when the street and address information are available.



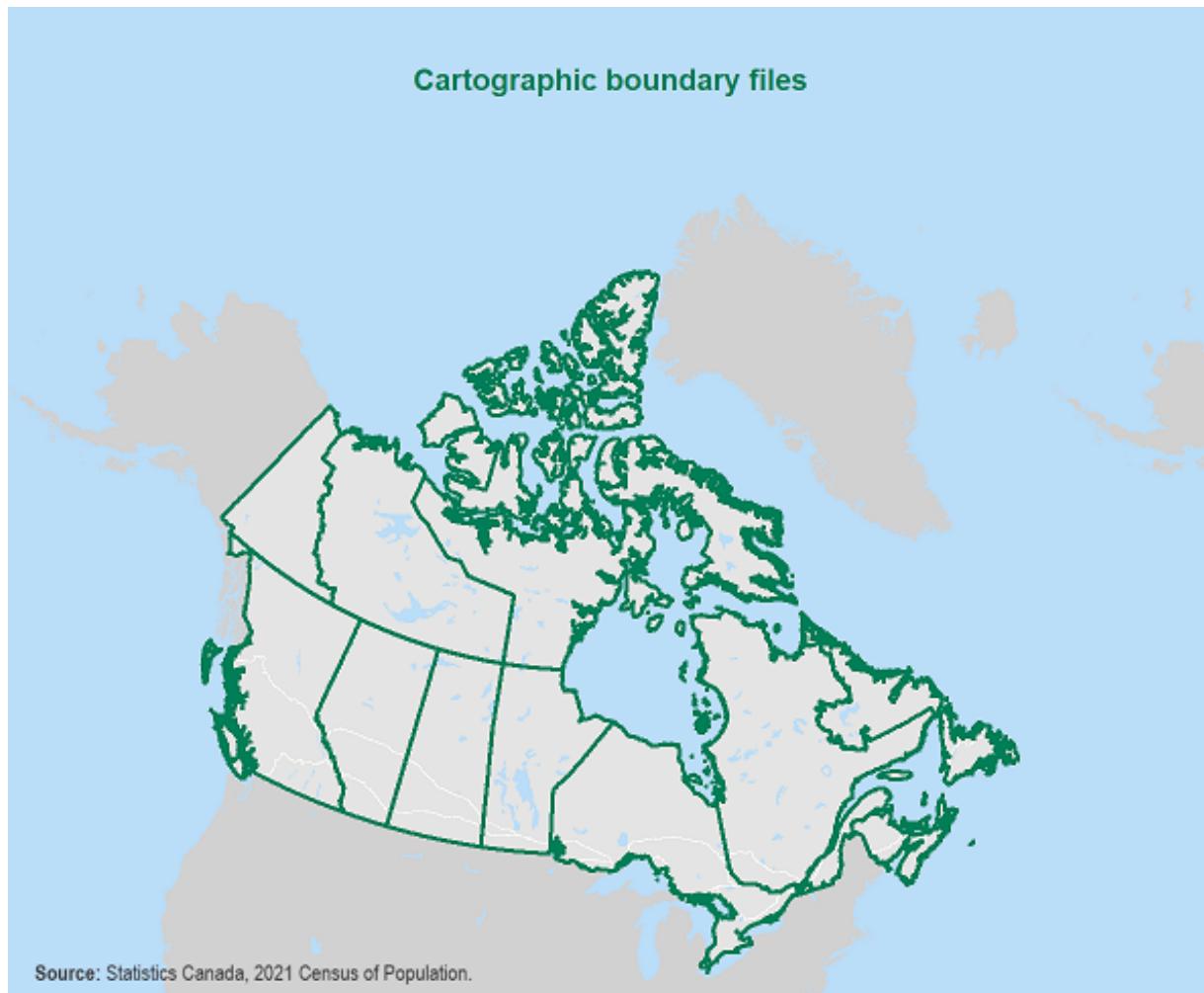
For more information on [blockface](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Cartographic boundary files (CBFs)

Definition

Cartographic Boundary Files (CBFs) portray the boundaries of standard geographic areas together with the shoreline around Canada. Selected inland lakes and rivers are available as supplementary layers.



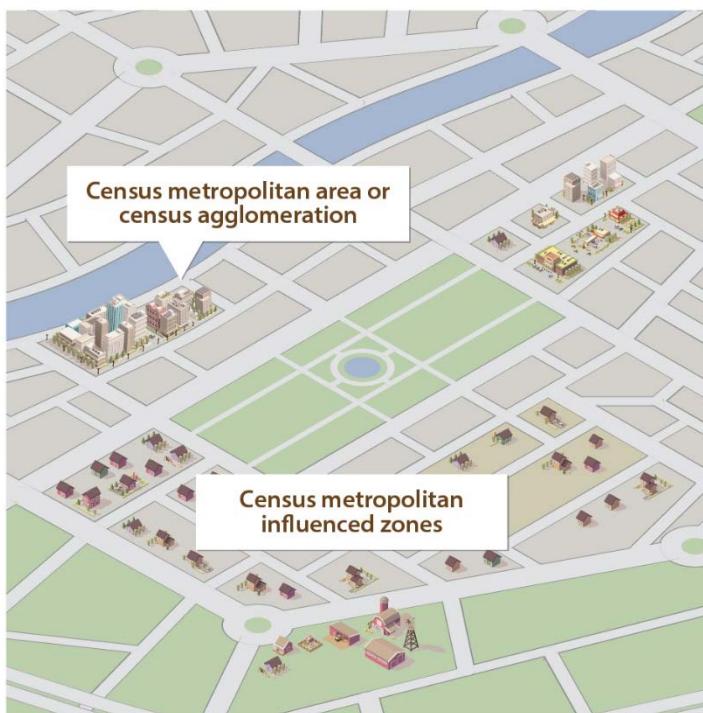
For more information on [cartographic boundary files](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ)

Definition

The census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ) is a concept that geographically differentiates the area of Canada outside census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs). Census subdivisions (CSDs) within provinces that are outside CMAs and CAs are assigned to one of four categories according to the degree of influence (strong, moderate, weak or no influence) that the CMAs or CAs have on them. CSDs within the territories that are outside CAs are assigned to a separate category.



For more information on the [census metropolitan influenced zone](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.

MIZ tutorial

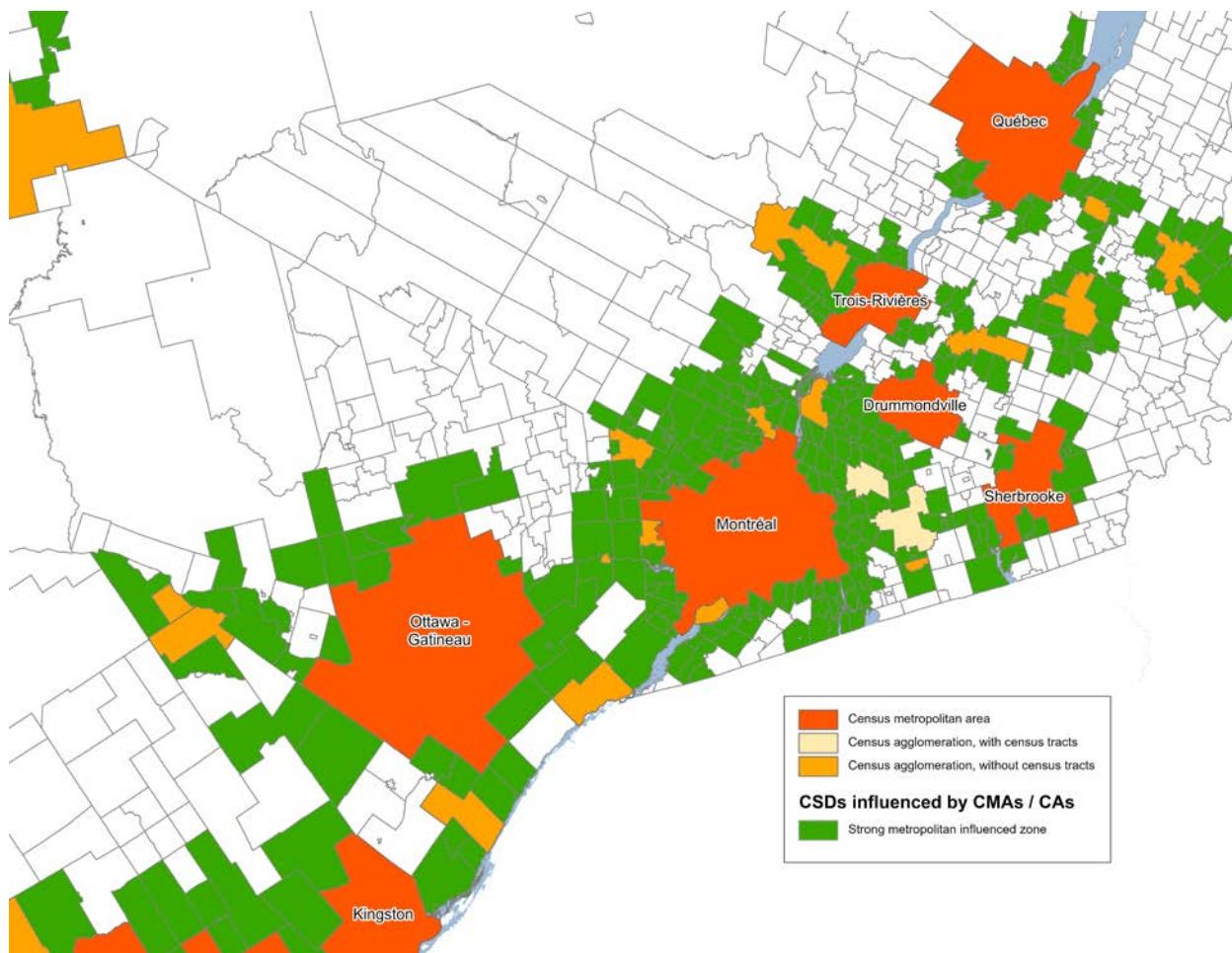
Census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs) exert a social and economic influence beyond their geographic limits. The census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ) classification categorizes census subdivisions (CSDs) that are outside of a CMA or CA based on the degree of influence that CMAs and CAs have on them.

A CSD within a province is assigned to a MIZ category depending on the percentage of its resident employed labour force that commute to work in one or more of the CSDs that are part of the delineation core of a CMA or CA.

The strong metropolitan influenced zone (**strong MIZ**) category includes CSDs in provinces where at least 30% of the resident employed labour force living in the CSD works in any CMA or CA core. It excludes CSDs with fewer than 40 persons in their resident employed labour force from the previous census.



Census subdivisions categorized by strong metropolitan influenced zone in Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Quebec



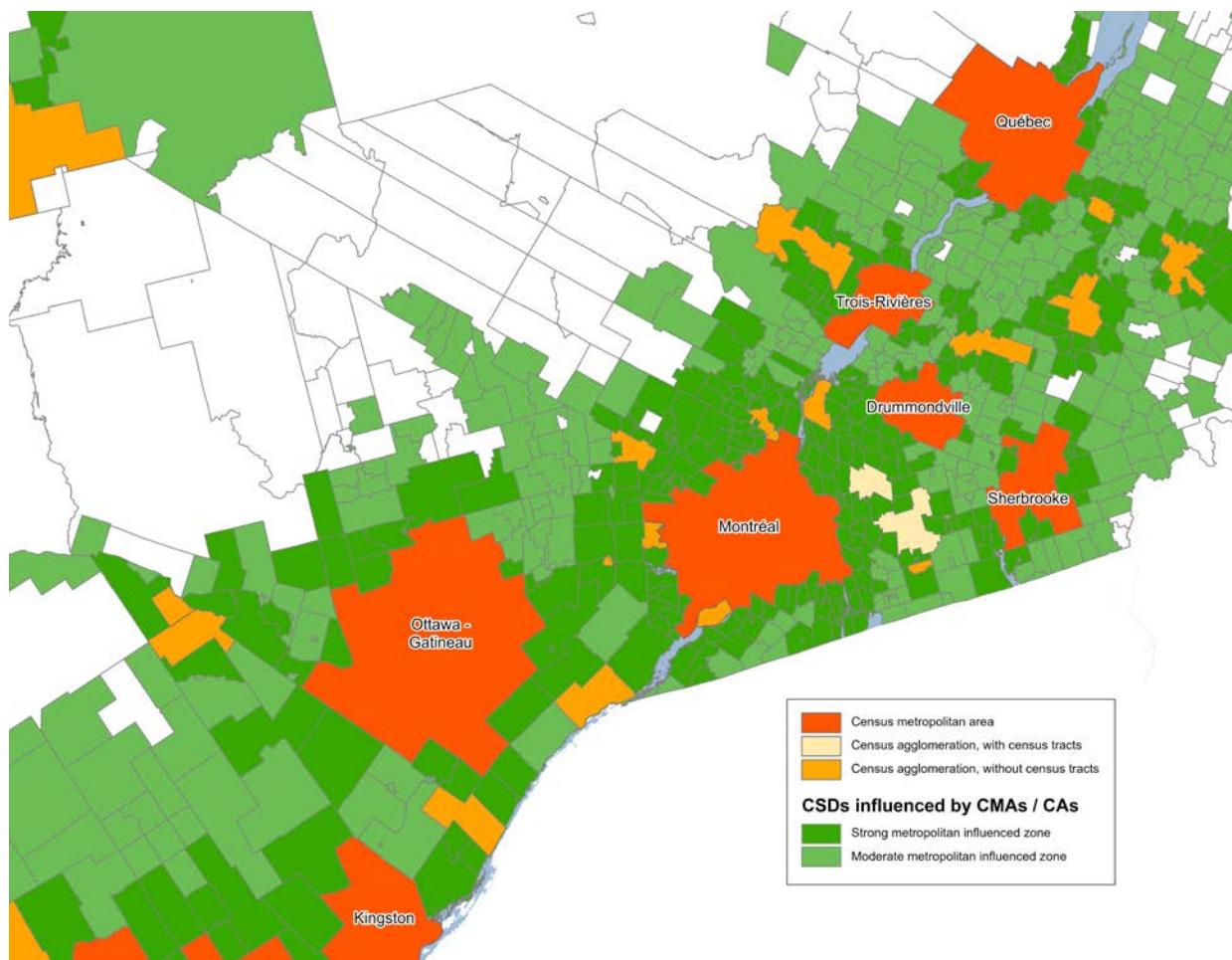
This map shows the census metropolitan areas (CMAs), census agglomerations (CAs) (subdivided and not subdivided into census tracts) and census subdivisions (CSDs) in Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Quebec. The CSDs are shaded according to which census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ) category they fall. CSDs in the strong metropolitan influenced zone (strong MIZ) category are shaded on this map.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

The moderate metropolitan influenced zone (**moderate MIZ**) category includes CSDs in provinces where at least 5%, but less than 30% of the resident employed labour force living in the CSD works in any CMA or CA core. It excludes CSDs with fewer than 40 persons in their resident employed labour force from the previous census.



Census subdivisions categorized by strong and moderate metropolitan influenced zones in Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Quebec



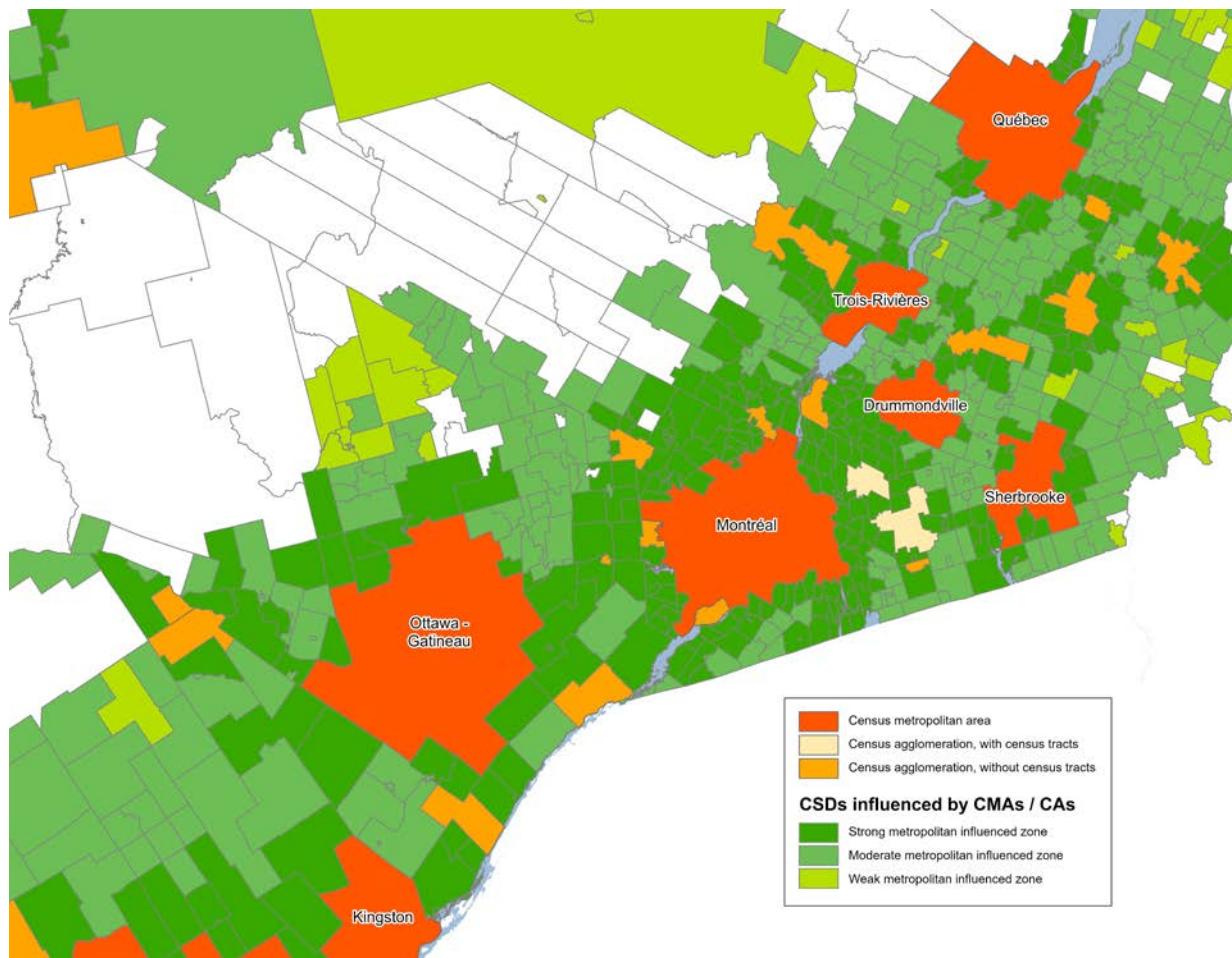
This map shows the census metropolitan areas (CMAs), census agglomerations (CAs) (subdivided and not subdivided into census tracts) and census subdivisions (CSDs) in Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Quebec. The CSDs are shaded according to which census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ) category they fall. CSDs in the strong metropolitan influenced zone (strong MIZ) and moderate metropolitan influenced zone (moderate MIZ) categories are shaded on this map.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

The weak metropolitan influenced zone (**weak MIZ**) category includes CSDs in provinces where more than 0%, but less than 5% of the resident employed labour force living in the CSD works in any CMA or CA core. It excludes CSDs with fewer than 40 persons in their resident employed labour force from the previous census.



Census subdivisions categorized by strong, moderate and weak metropolitan influenced zones in Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Quebec



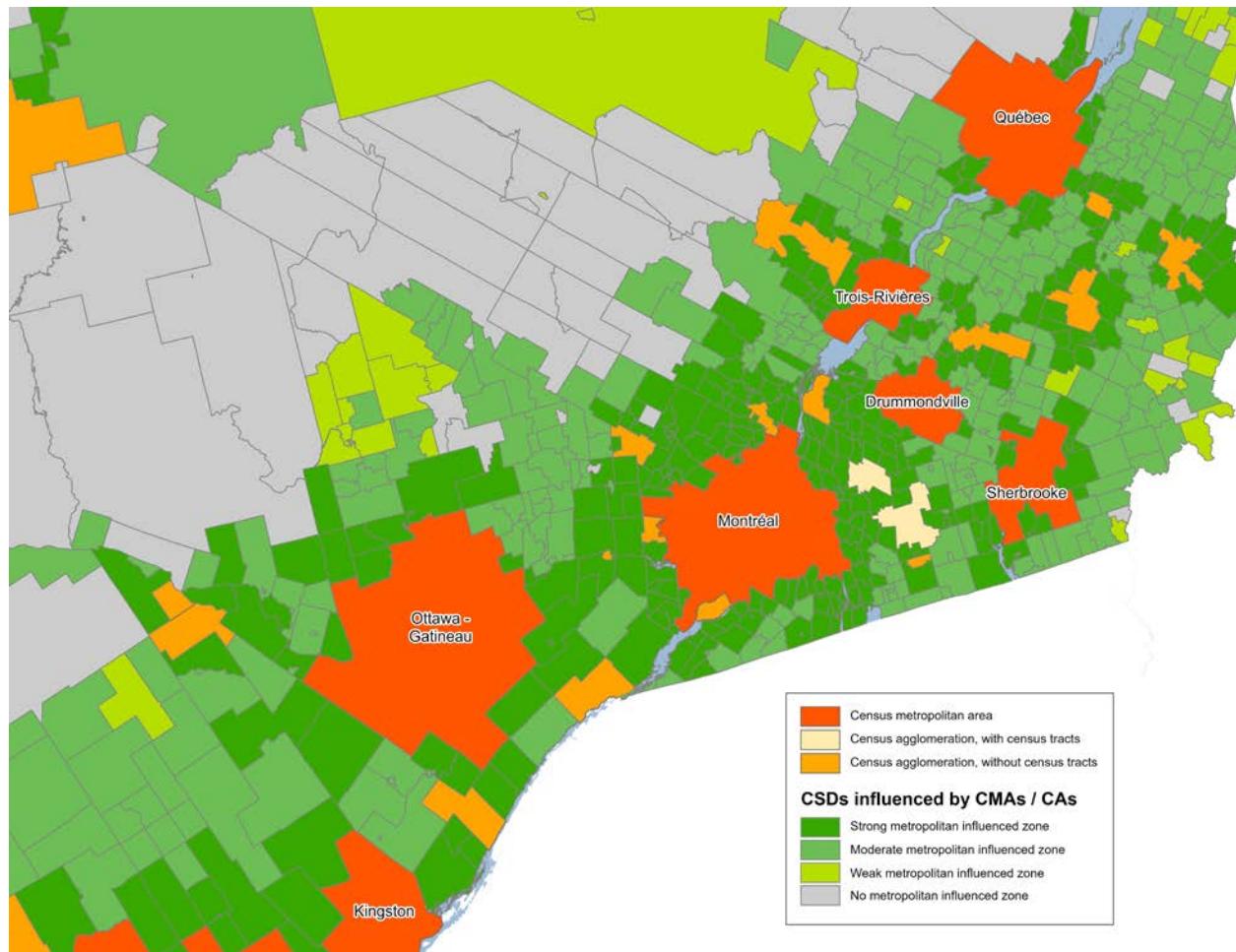
This map shows the census metropolitan areas (CMAs), census agglomerations (CAs) (subdivided and not subdivided into census tracts) and census subdivisions (CSDs) in Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Quebec. The CSDs are shaded according to which census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ) category they fall. CSDs in the strong metropolitan influenced zone (strong MIZ), moderate metropolitan influenced zone (moderate MIZ) and weak metropolitan influenced zone (weak MIZ) categories are shaded on this map.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

The no metropolitan influenced zone (**no MIZ**) category includes CSDs in provinces where no people of the resident employed labour force commutes to work in a CMA or CA core. It also includes CSDs in provinces with fewer than 40 persons in their resident employed labour force from the previous census.



Census subdivisions categorized by strong, moderate, weak and no metropolitan influenced zones in Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Quebec



This map shows the census metropolitan areas (CMAs), census agglomerations (CAs) (subdivided and not subdivided into census tracts) and census subdivisions (CSDs) in Eastern Ontario and Southwestern Quebec. The CSDs are shaded according to which census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ) category they fall. CSDs in the strong metropolitan influenced zone (strong MIZ), moderate metropolitan influenced zone (moderate MIZ), weak metropolitan influenced zone (weak MIZ) and no metropolitan influenced zone (no MIZ) categories are shaded on this map.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.



Coordinate system

Definition

A coordinate system is a reference system based on mathematical rules for specifying positions (locations) on the surface of the earth. The coordinate values can be spherical (latitude and longitude) using angular units of measure such as degrees, minutes and seconds or planar (Universal Transverse Mercator), using linear units such as metres. Cartographic boundary files, digital boundary files, representative points and the road network files are disseminated in Lambert coordinates.



For more information on the [coordinate system](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Datum

Definition

A datum is a geodetic reference system that includes an ellipsoid (a mathematical reference model of the earth) and an origin against which the latitude and longitude of all other points on the earth's surface are referenced.

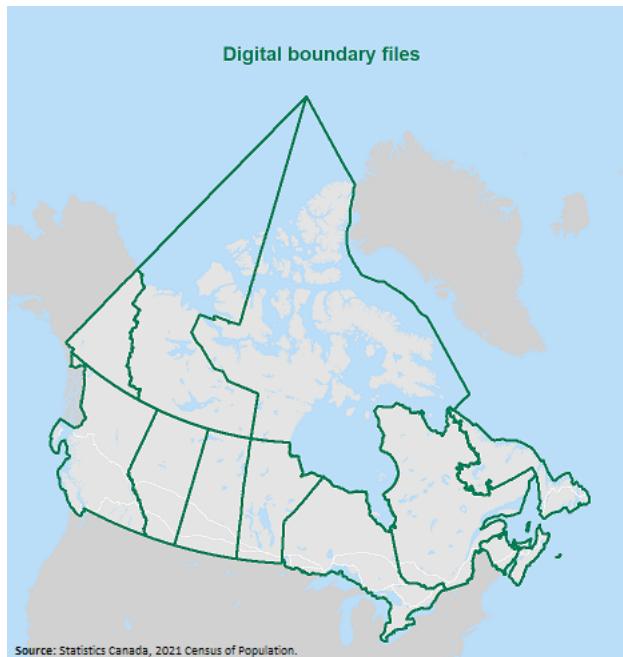
For more information on [datum](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Digital boundary files (DBFs)

Definition

Digital boundary files (DBFs) depict the full extent of the boundaries of standard geographic areas established for the purpose of disseminating census data, including the coastal water area. Therefore, boundaries often extend as straight lines into bodies of water.



For more information on [digital boundary files](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Ecumene

Definition

Ecumene is a term used by geographers to mean inhabited land. It generally refers to land where people have made their permanent home and to all work areas that are considered occupied and used for agricultural or any other economic purposes. Thus, there can be various types of ecumenes, each having its own unique characteristics (population ecumene, agricultural ecumene, industrial ecumene, etc.).



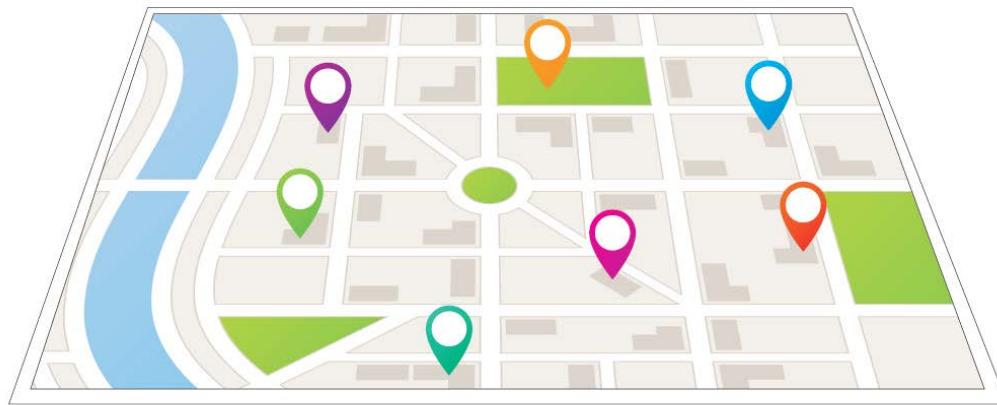
For more information on [Ecumene](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Geocoding

Definition

Geocoding is the process of assigning geographic identifiers (codes or x, y coordinates) to map features and data records. The resulting geocodes permit data to be linked geographically to a place on the earth.



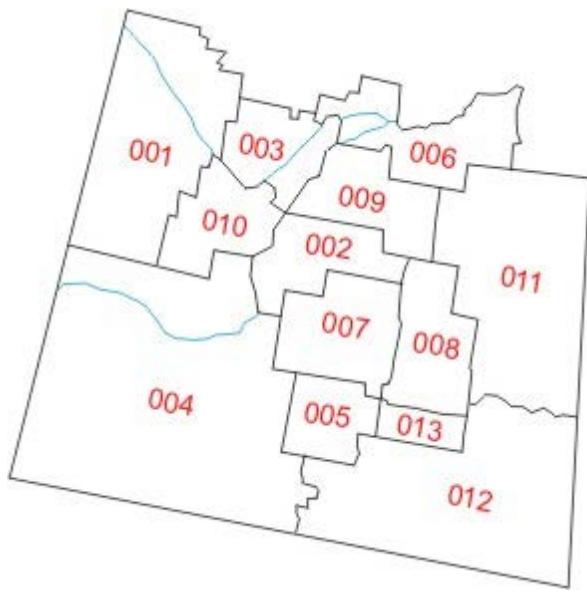
For more information on [geocoding](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Geographic code

Definition

A geographic code is a numerical identifier assigned to a geographic area. Every kind of geographic area in Canada has its own type of geographic code. For example, the geographic code assigned to a census subdivision (CSD) makes it possible to distinguish that CSD from any other CSD with the same name. The code is used to identify and access standard geographic areas for the purposes of data storage, retrieval and display.



For more information on [geographic code](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.

Geographic code tutorial

Most standard geographic areas are commonly known by their names, but these names are not always unique. Geographic codes are numbers that represent a level of geography. When codes that represent lower levels of geography are used in combination with codes that represent higher levels of geography, they provide a way to uniquely identify each geographic unit in Canada.

For example, the name ‘Windsor’ identifies three different census subdivisions (CSDs) [municipalities] in Canada. To uniquely identify each of these Windsor CSDs in Canada, the two-digit province/territory (PR) code and the two-digit census division (CD) code must precede the three-digit census subdivision (CSD) code:

In another example, we see a few different types of geographic units in Ontario share the name ‘Toronto’. All of these overlap in the same general area: census subdivision (CSD), census division (CD), census metropolitan area (CMA), population centre (POPCTR) and economic region (ER). The geographic coding structure for each corresponding area is what differentiates one area from the next.

Examples of geographic codes for the Windsor census subdivisions

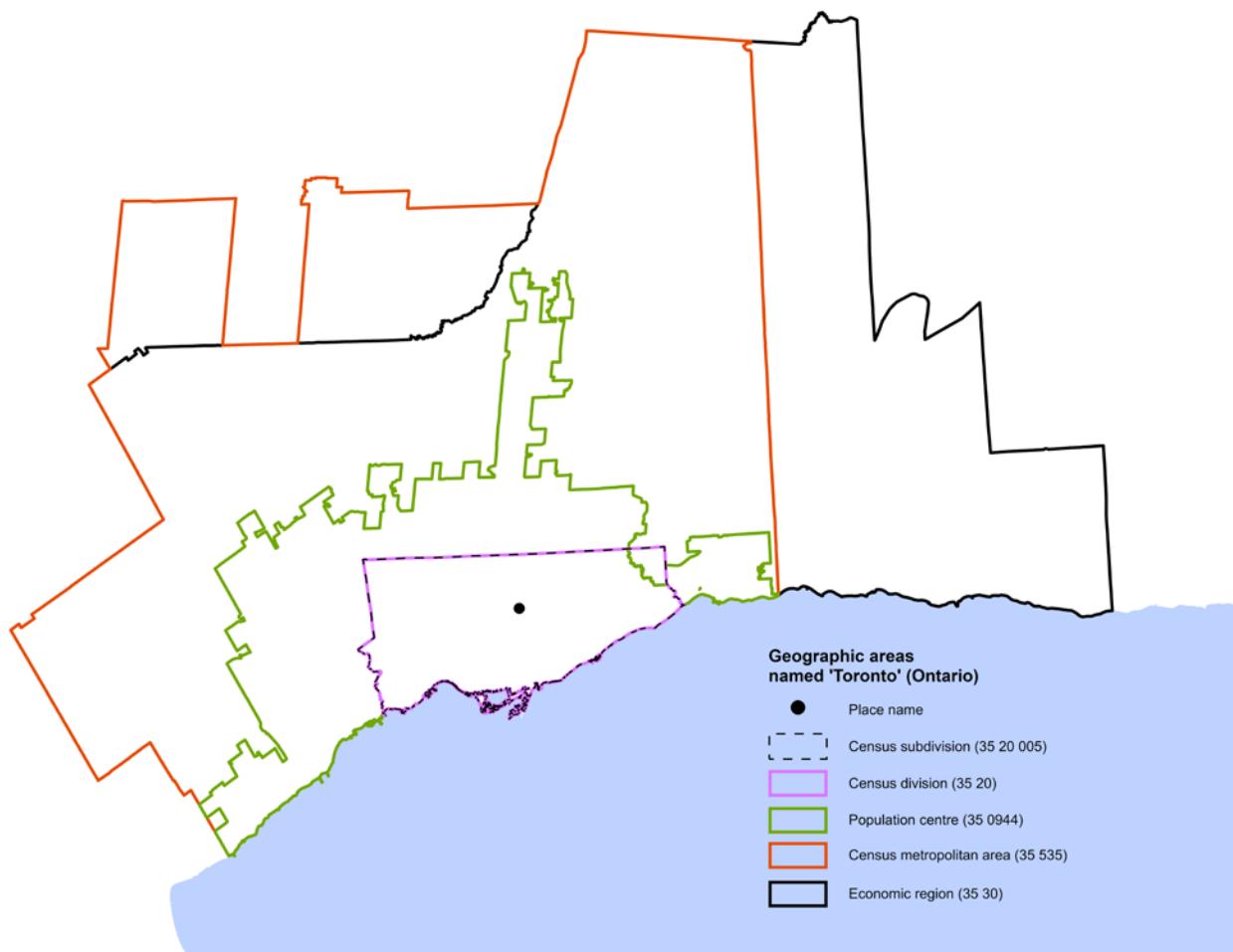
PR-CD-CSD code	Province (PR) name	Census division (CD) name	Census subdivision (CSD) name
12 08 002	Nova Scotia	Hants	Windsor
24 42 088	Quebec	Le Val-Saint-François	Windsor
35 37 039	Ontario	Essex	Windsor

For each level of geography, the unique code consists of a combination of the geographic code for that specific level as well as the code for higher levels of geography. For example, at the CD level, the unique geographic code



(3520) combines the PR code (35) and the CD code (20). Similarly, the unique CSD code (3520005) combines the PR code (35), the CD code (20) and the CSD code (005). The census metropolitan area, on the other hand, is comprised of a combination of the PR code (35) and the CMA code (535). These geographic codes only become unique identifiers when they are grouped in this manner.

Geographic areas named ‘Toronto’ (Ontario)



The above map shows the six overlapping geographic areas in Ontario named ‘Toronto’ and their associated geographic codes. These include the census metropolitan area, economic region, population centre, census division, census subdivision and place name.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.



Geographic reference date

Definition

The geographic reference date is a date determined by Statistics Canada for the purpose of finalizing the geographic framework for which census data will be collected, tabulated and reported. For the 2021 Census, the geographic reference date is January 1, 2021.



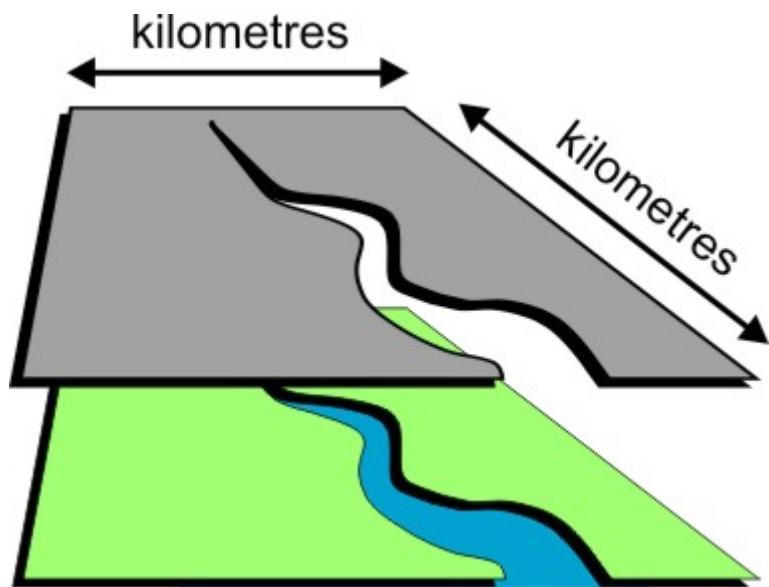
For more information on [geographic reference date](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Land area

Definition

Land area is the number of square kilometres of land in a given geographic area (e.g., a province, a territory, a city). Land area data are unofficial and are provided for the sole purpose of calculating population density.



For more information on [land area](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Map projection

Definition

A map projection is the mathematical formula used in the process of transforming positions from the earth's three-dimensional curved surface to a two-dimensional flat surface. The positions on the earth are defined using spherical coordinates of latitude and longitude, usually given in degrees. On a map, the positions may still be defined by spherical coordinates, or by linear coordinates, usually given in metres.



For more information on [map projection](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



National Geographic Database (NGD)

Definition

The National Geographic Database (NGD) is a spatial database that contains attributed roads (names and addresses) and boundaries used to delineate administrative and statistical geographic entities such as provinces, municipalities, census tracts and health regions. The fundamental components of the NGD include a road and boundary line layer fully integrated with a polygon layer. The road and boundary line layer define polygons, which are then aggregated into the various statistical and administrative geographies. Road attribution from the line layer, specifically road name and address range, is also used to determine the location of buildings and place them into specific geographies based on the road and line layer relationship to the polygons. The collection and dissemination of socio-economic data can therefore be organized into a geographic framework as a result of the NGD line and polygon relationships. The NGD is a shared database between Statistics Canada and Elections Canada as both agencies have shared requirements for attributed road network to conduct their respective business and collective maintenance reduces costs.

For more information on [National Geographic Database](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Population density

Definition

Population density is the number of persons per square kilometre.



For more information on [population density](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Postal code^{OM}

Definition

The postal code^{OM} is a six-character code defined and maintained by Canada Post Corporation for the purpose of sorting and delivering mail.



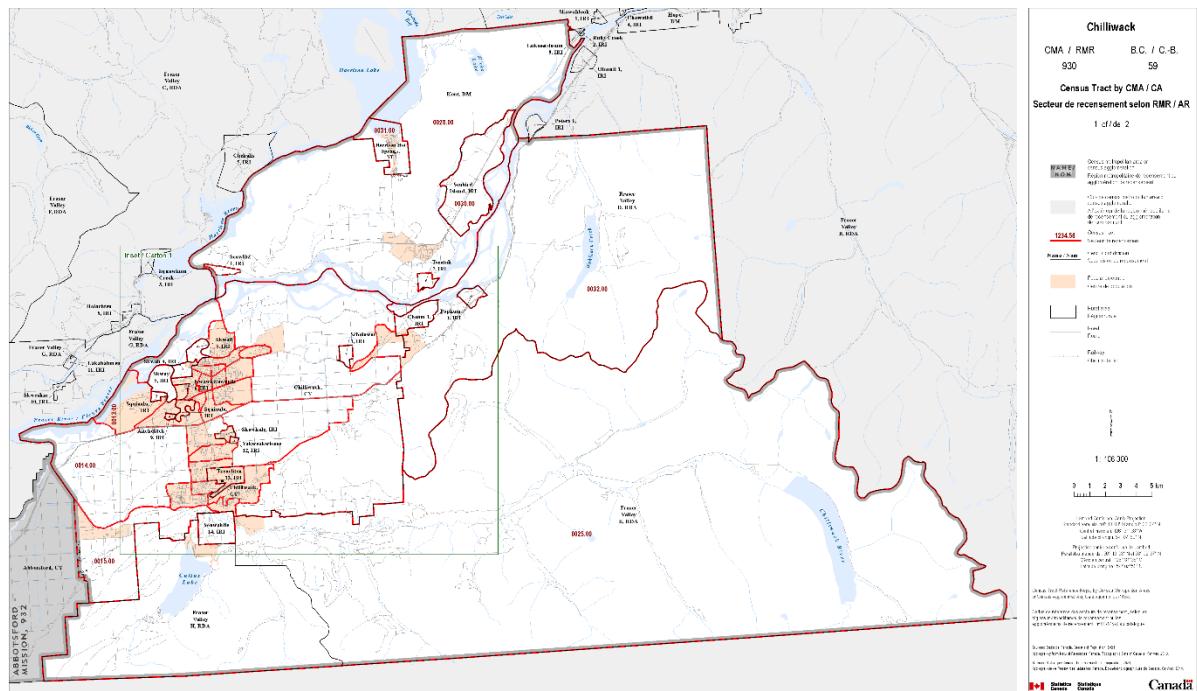
For more information on [postal code^{OM}](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Reference map

Definition

A reference map shows the location of the geographic areas for which census data are tabulated and disseminated. The maps display the boundaries, names and unique identifiers of standard geographic areas, as well as selected cultural and physical features, such as roads, railroads, coastlines, rivers and lakes.



For more information on [reference map](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.

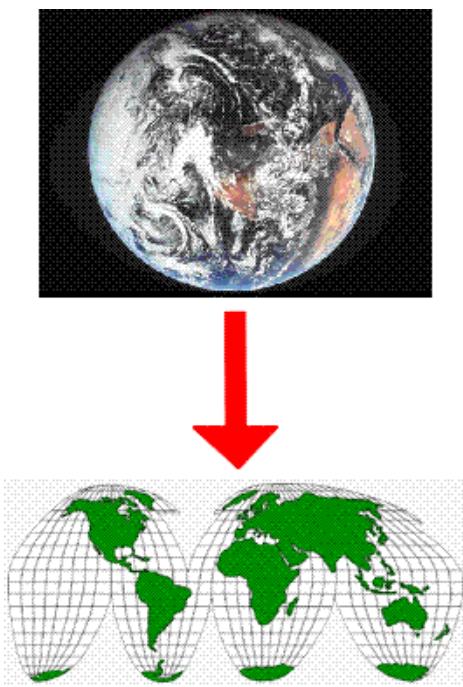
Reference and thematic map tutorial

A brief guide to reading maps

A map, like a picture, is worth a thousand words. A map is a simplified view of the earth's surface that shows where places and features are located and helps us communicate spatial information efficiently. In this section, you will learn more about maps and how to interpret them.

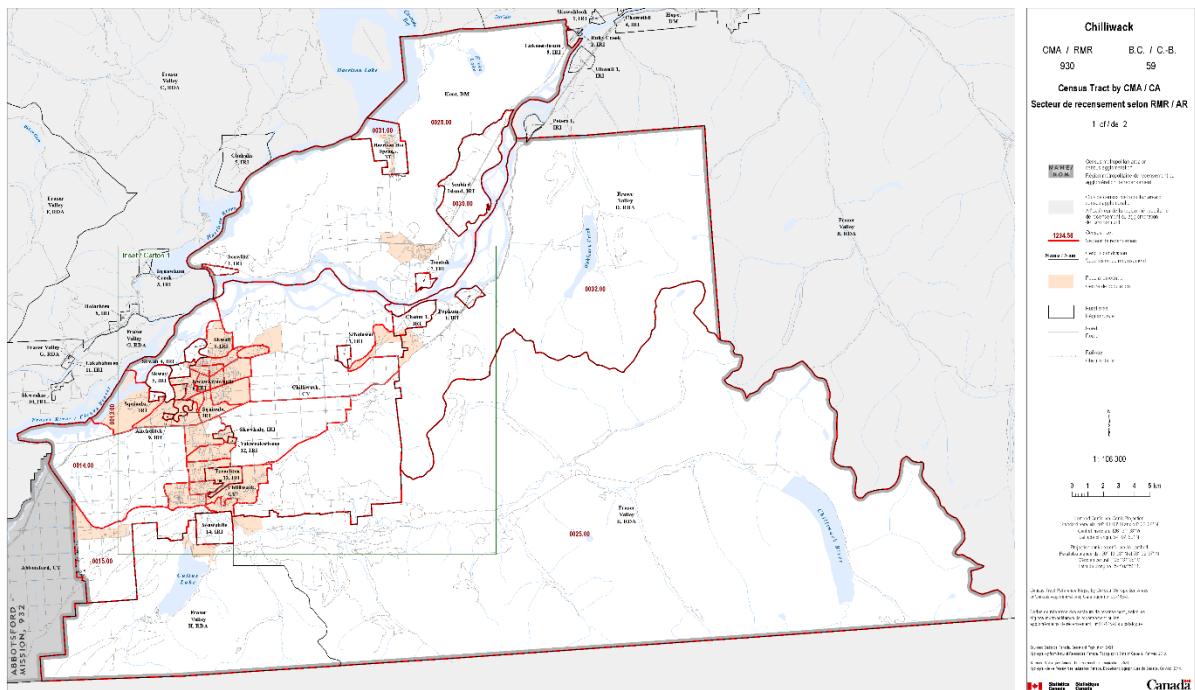
Statistics Canada produces two types of maps: reference maps and thematic maps.





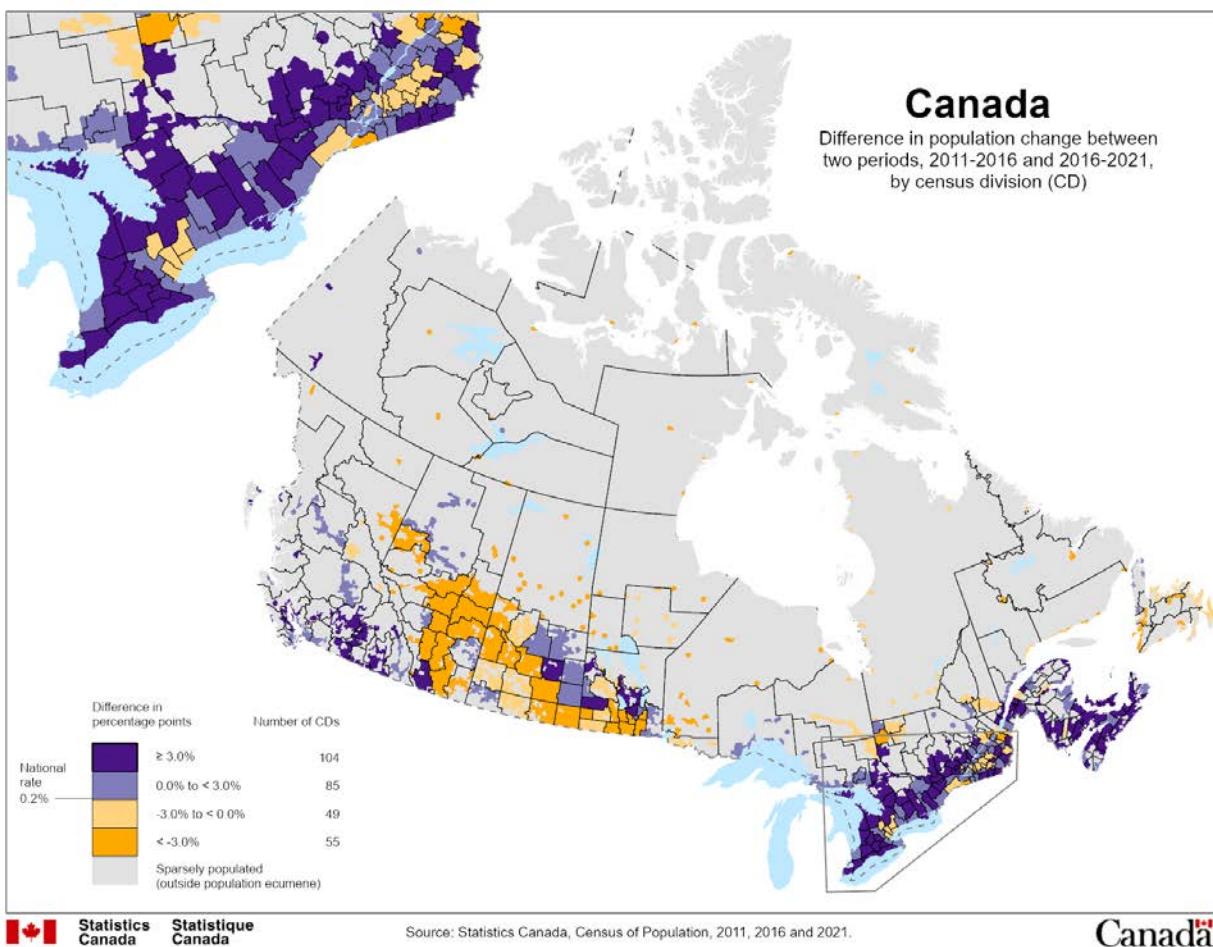
Reference maps

A reference map shows the location of geographic areas for which census data are tabulated and disseminated. The maps display the boundaries, names and unique identifiers of standard geographic areas, as well as selected cultural and physical features such as roads, railroads, coastlines, rivers and lakes.



Thematic maps

A thematic map shows the spatial distribution of one or more specific data themes for selected geographic areas. The map may be qualitative in nature (e.g., predominant farm types) or quantitative (e.g., percentage population change).



Map elements

There are five basic design elements that are usually included on a map.

1. Title
2. Legend
3. Source
4. Scale
5. North arrow



Title

On a reference map, the title indicates the geographic area displayed. Titles are an important element of a map.

Chilliwack

CMA / RMR	B.C. / C.-B.
930	59

Census Tract by CMA / CA

Secteur de recensement selon RMR / AR

1 of / de 2

On a thematic map, the title indicates the geographic area displayed and information about the theme, including source, date and geographic level of data.

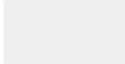
Canada

Difference in population change between
two periods, 2011-2016 and 2016-2021,
by census division (CD)



Legend

The legend is key to understanding the map and, together with the title, is an important element when interpreting a map. The map legend explains the meaning of symbols and colours used on the map.

NAME/ NOM	Census metropolitan area or census agglomeration Région métropolitaine de recensement ou agglomération de recensement
	Outside census metropolitan area or census agglomeration À l'extérieur de la région métropolitaine de recensement ou agglomération de recensement
1234.56	Census tract Secteur de recensement
Name / Nom	Census subdivision Subdivision de recensement
	Population centre Centre de population
	Rural area Région rurale
	Road Route
	Railway Chemin de fer

Source

The source is a clear reference to the origin of the data portrayed on a map. Information about the data source contributes to understanding the map and facilitates further research into the topic of the map.

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Census of Population*, 2021;
Hydrography from Natural Resources Canada, *Topographic Data of Canada*, CanVec, 2019.

Sources: Statistique Canada, *Recensement de la population*, 2021;
Hydrographie de Ressources naturelles Canada, *Données topographiques du Canada*, CanVec, 2019.



Scale

Scale shows how distance on the map relates to distance on the ground. It is a measurement of the amount of reduction that takes place going from real-world dimensions to the dimensions of a map displayed on a page or screen.

There are two common expressions of scale.

Representative fraction: **1:157 000**

The representative fraction shows how many ground units are represented by a single map unit. In this case, one unit of distance on the map is equivalent to 157 000 of the same units on the ground. The ratio is universal and does not require the unit of measurement to be specified.

Graphic scale bar:



The graphic scale bar shows what a physical measurement on the map would be equivalent to on the ground. It provides a visual indication of the distances between map features. A graphic scale bar has the advantage of remaining true if the map is enlarged or reduced.

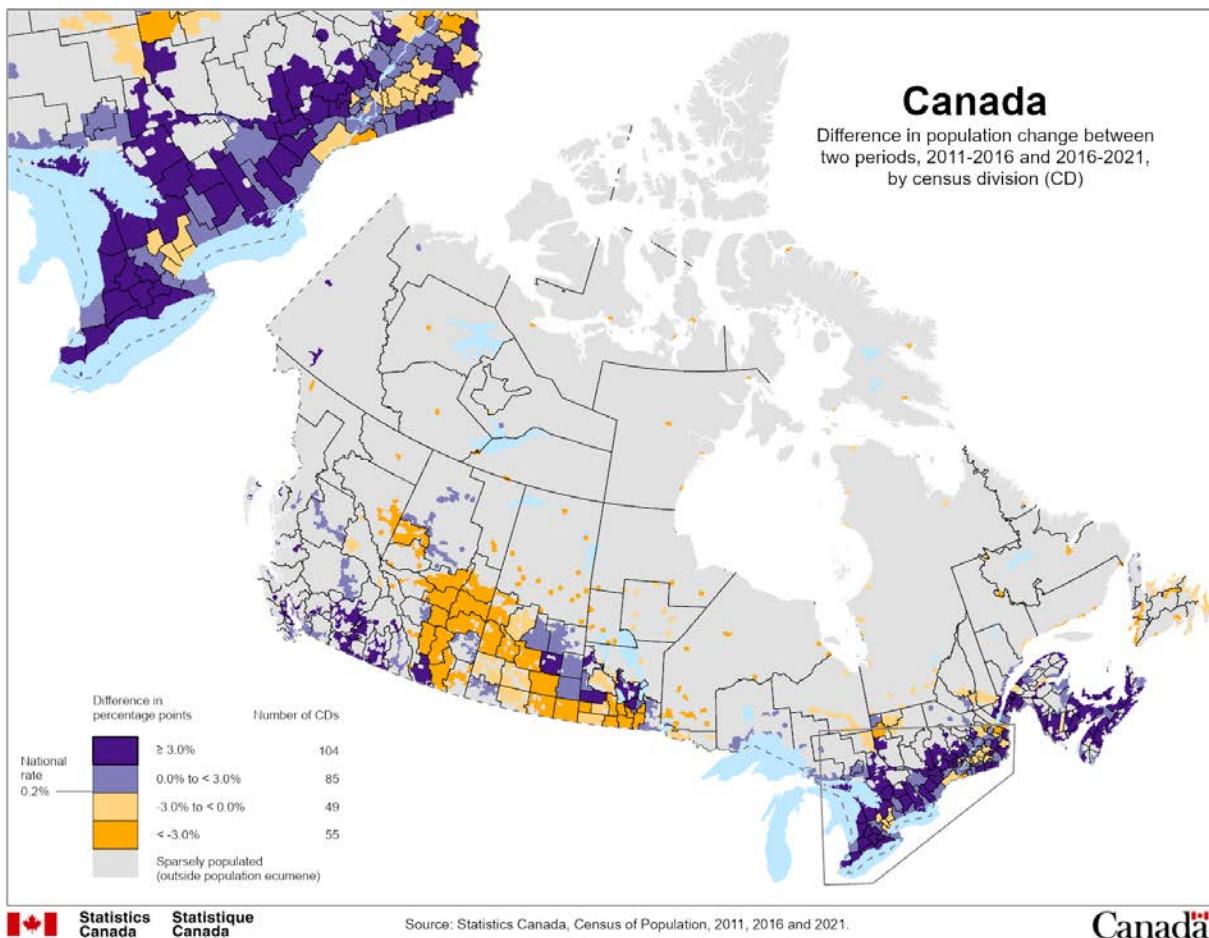
Small scale or large scale

Small-scale maps show more land coverage in less detail, for example 1:24,200,000.

Large-scale maps show less land coverage in greater detail, for example 1:10,000.

Sometimes, small-scale maps contain ‘insets’ at a larger scale to reveal details that are hidden by congestion in the main map.





North arrow

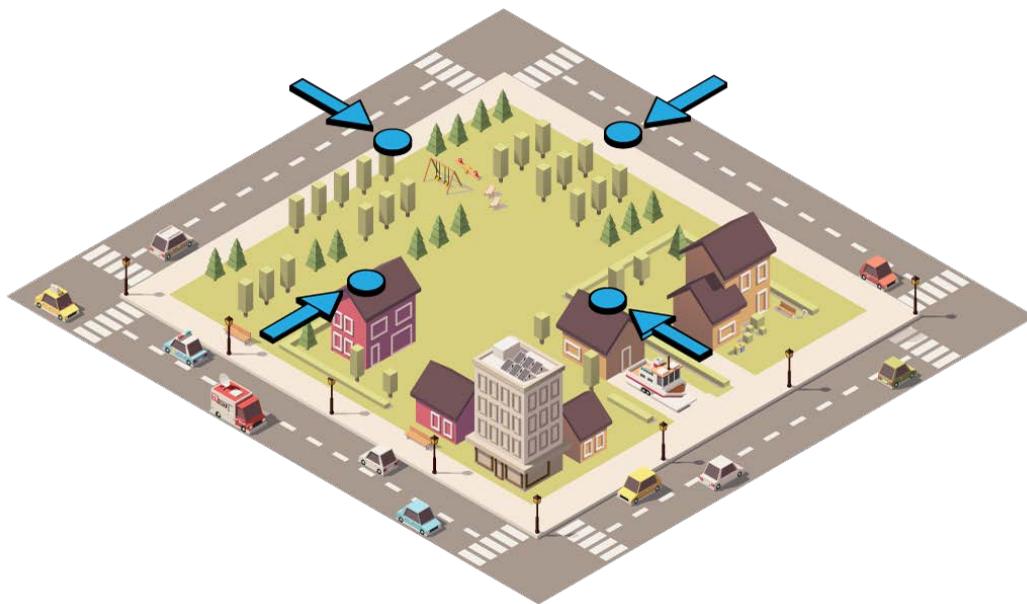
The north arrow points to the North Pole and provides an indication of the orientation of the map. If a north arrow does not appear on the map, north is assumed to be toward the top of the map.



Representative point

Definition

A representative point is a coordinate point that represents a line or a polygon. The point is centrally located along the line, and centrally located or population weighted in the polygon.



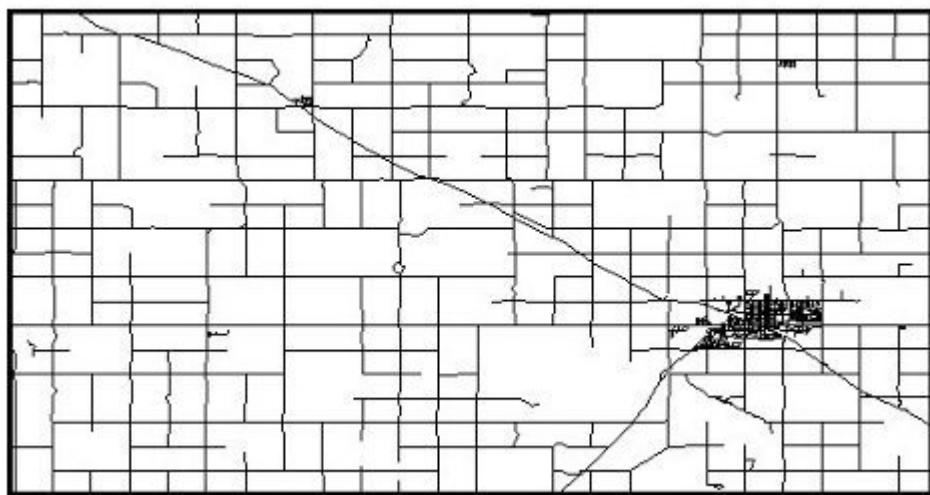
For more information on [representative point](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Road network file (RNF)

Definition

The road network file (RNF) contains streets, street names, street types, street directions and address ranges. Address ranges are dwelling-based.



For more information on [road network file](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI)

Definition

The Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) is a repository of integrated spatial and tabular datasets that together form the geographic framework for all of Statistics Canada's data collection and dissemination activities. It is both an internal maintenance database and a data archive whose primary purpose is to facilitate the generation of geographic data products. It contains vintages of the National Geographic Database (NGD), administrative and statistical geographic areas, cartographic support datasets, geocoding support datasets, field collection activity data files, population and dwelling count variables, and other datasets integral to Statistics Canada operations requiring a spatial component.

For more information on [Spatial Data Infrastructure](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Spatial data quality elements

Definition

Spatial data quality elements provide information on the fitness for use of a spatial database by describing why, when and how the data are created, and how accurate the data are. The elements include an overview describing the purpose and usage, as well as specific quality elements reporting on lineage, positional accuracy, attribute accuracy, logical consistency and completeness. This information is provided to users for all spatial data products disseminated for the census.

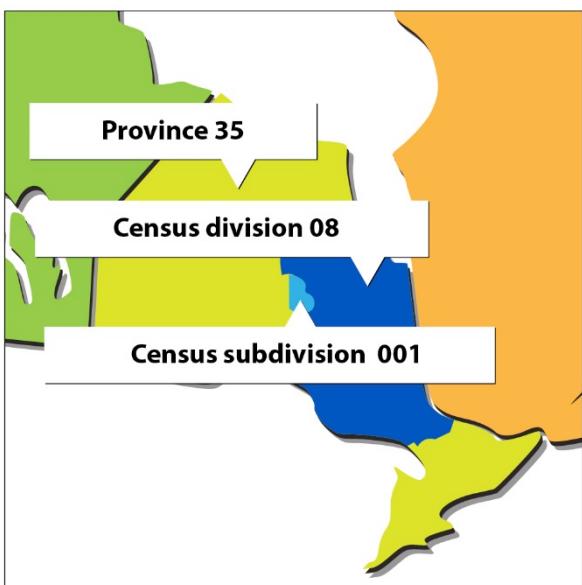
For more information on [spatial data quality elements](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Standard Geographical Classification (SGC)

Definition

The Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2021 is Statistics Canada's official classification of geographic areas in Canada. It is designed to enable the production of integrated statistics by geographic areas. The classification provides names and codes for four levels of geography: geographical regions of Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions (such as counties and regional municipalities) and census subdivisions (such as municipalities). The four geographic levels are hierarchically related and a seven-digit code is used to represent this relationship.



For more information on [Standard Geographical Classification](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Statistical Area Classification (SAC)

Definition

The Statistical Area Classification (SAC) groups census subdivisions (CSDs) according to whether they are a component of a census metropolitan area (CMA), a census agglomeration (CA), or census metropolitan influenced zone (MIZ). The MIZ categorizes all CSDs in the provinces and territories that are outside CMAs and CAs. CSDs within the provinces that are outside CMAs and CAs are assigned to one of four categories according to the degree of influence (strong, moderate, weak or no influence) that the CMAs or CAs have on them. CSDs within the territories that are outside CAs are assigned to a separate category.

For more information on [Statistical Area Classification](#), consult the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*.



Statistical areas

Definition

Statistical areas are defined by Statistics Canada to support the dissemination of data. They are created according to a set of rules based on geographic attributes and one or more characteristics of the resident population. Statistical areas maintained by Statistics Canada include:

- [Census agricultural region](#)
- [Economic region](#)
- [Census consolidated subdivision](#)
- [Census metropolitan area and census agglomeration](#)
- [Census metropolitan influenced zones](#)
- [Population centre](#)
- [Rural area](#)
- [Census tract](#)
- [Aggregate Dissemination Areas](#)
- [Dissemination area](#)
- [Dissemination block](#)
- [Blockface](#)
- [Place name](#)
- [Census subdivision – previous census](#)

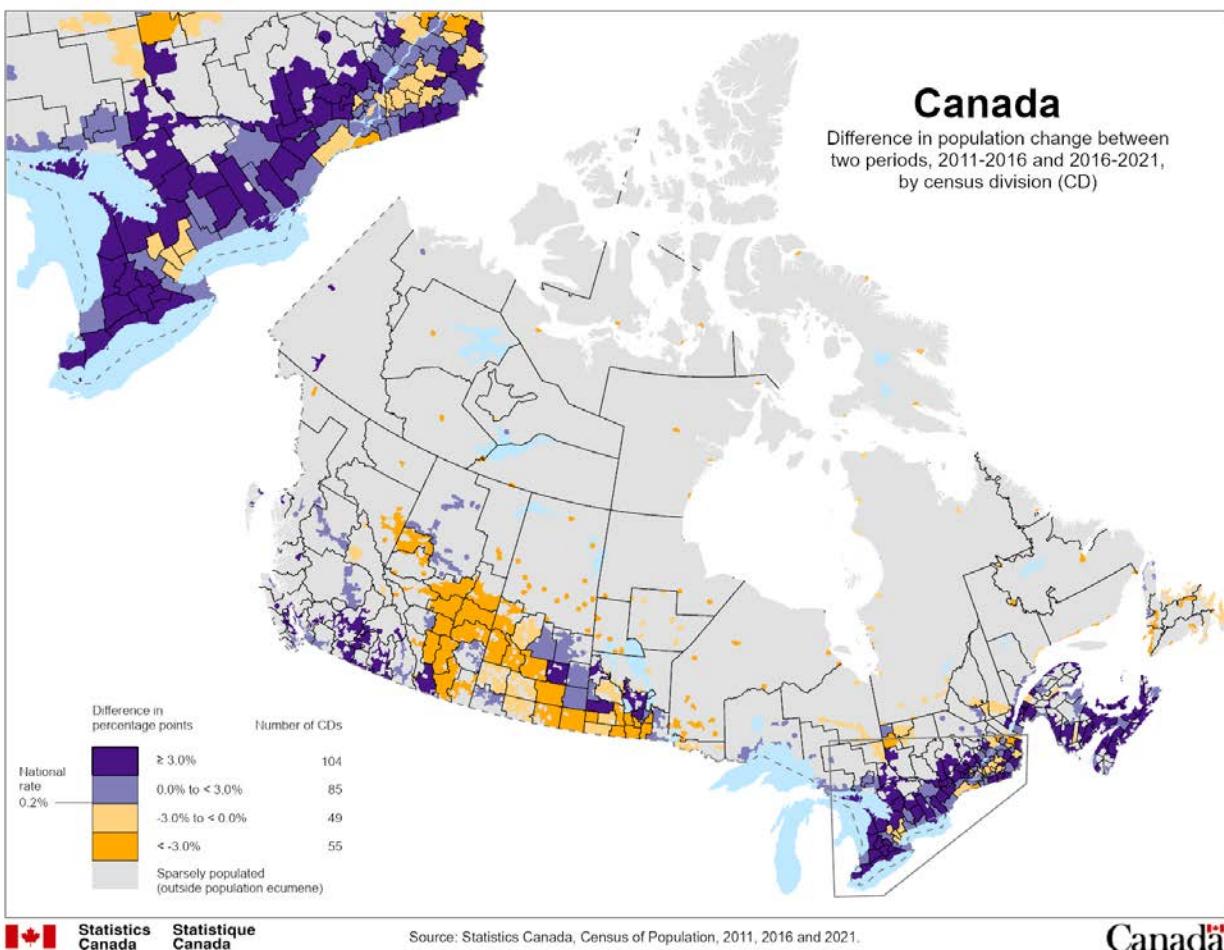
For more information on each of the statistical areas described above, consult the related definitions as well as the definitions from the [Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021](#).



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Definition

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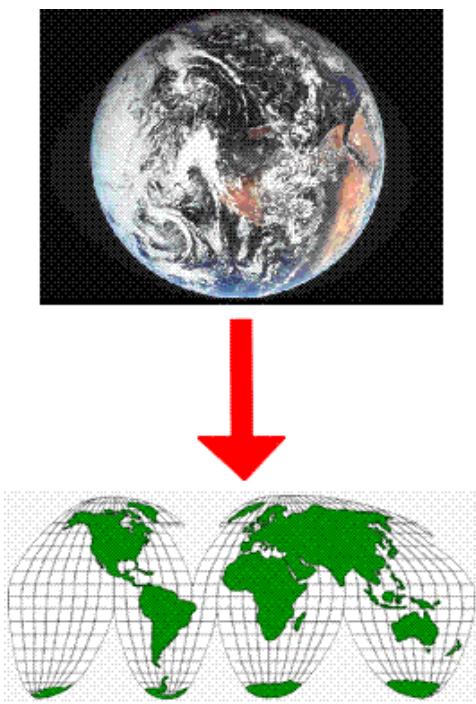
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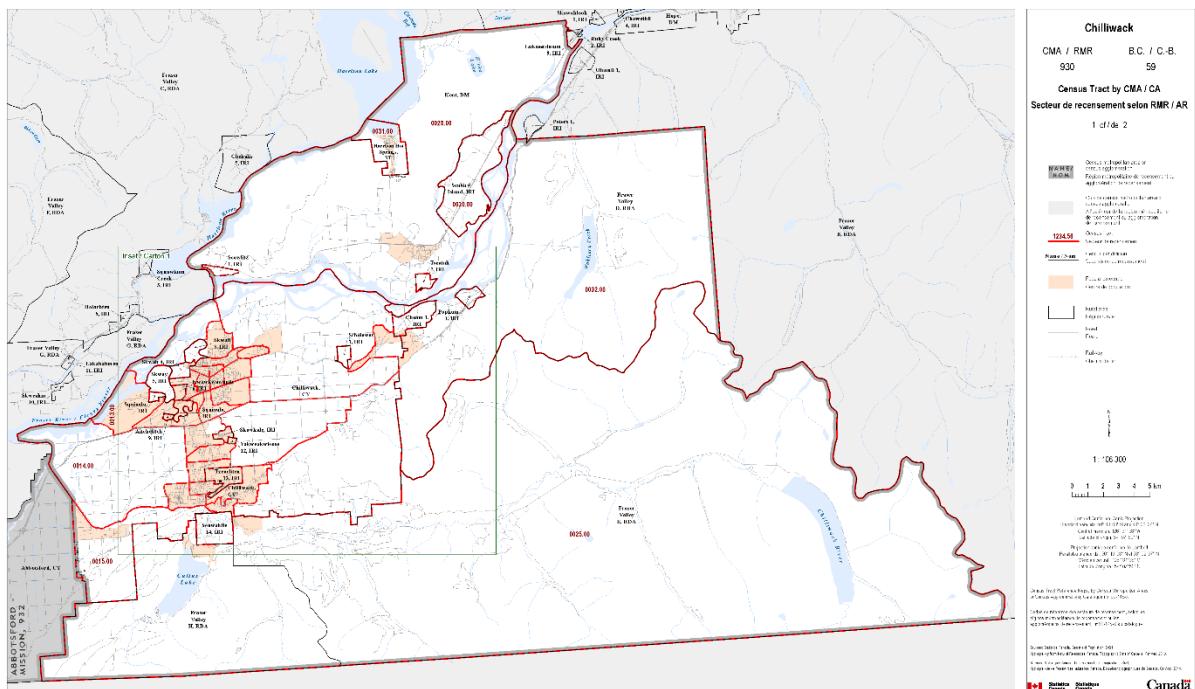
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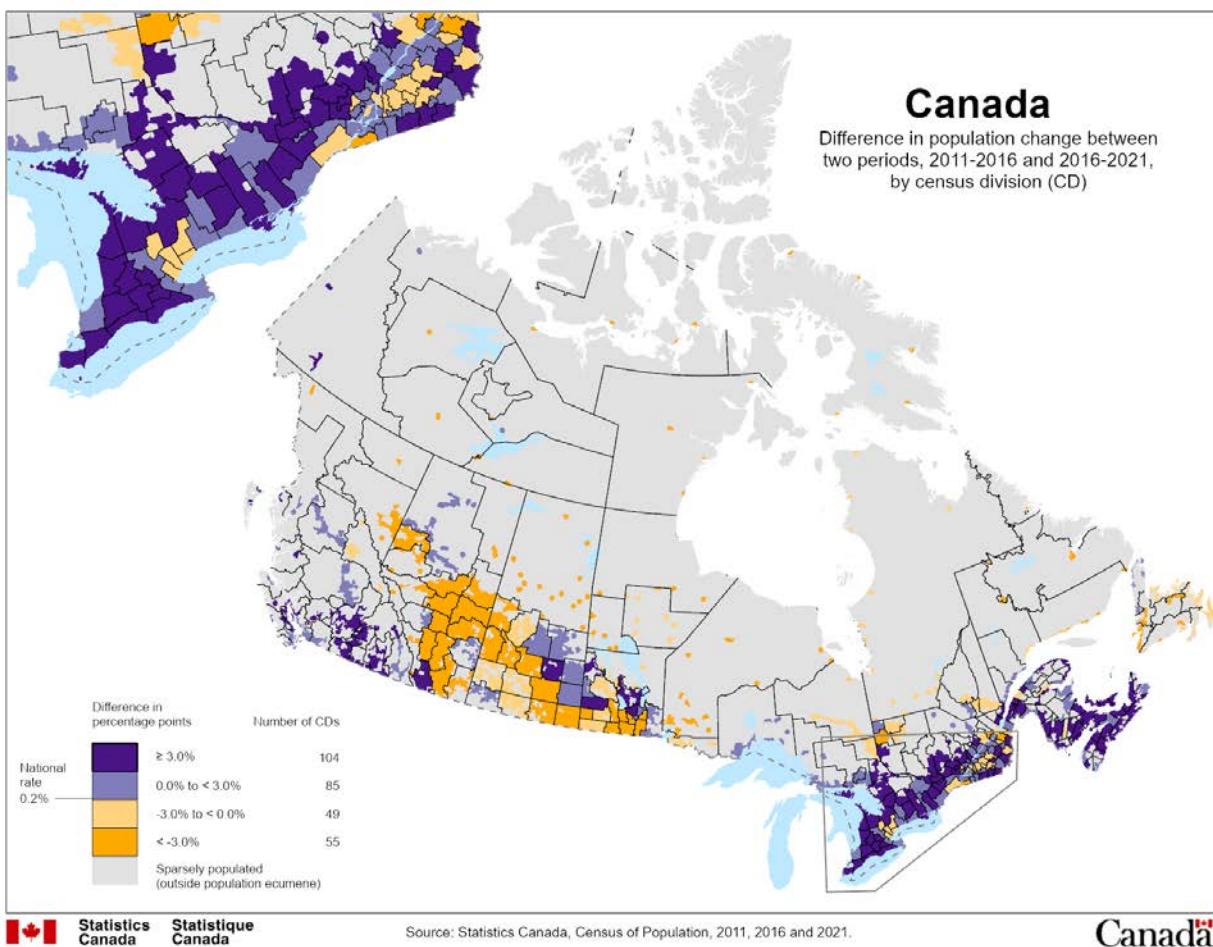
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Scale

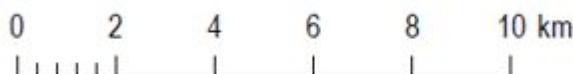
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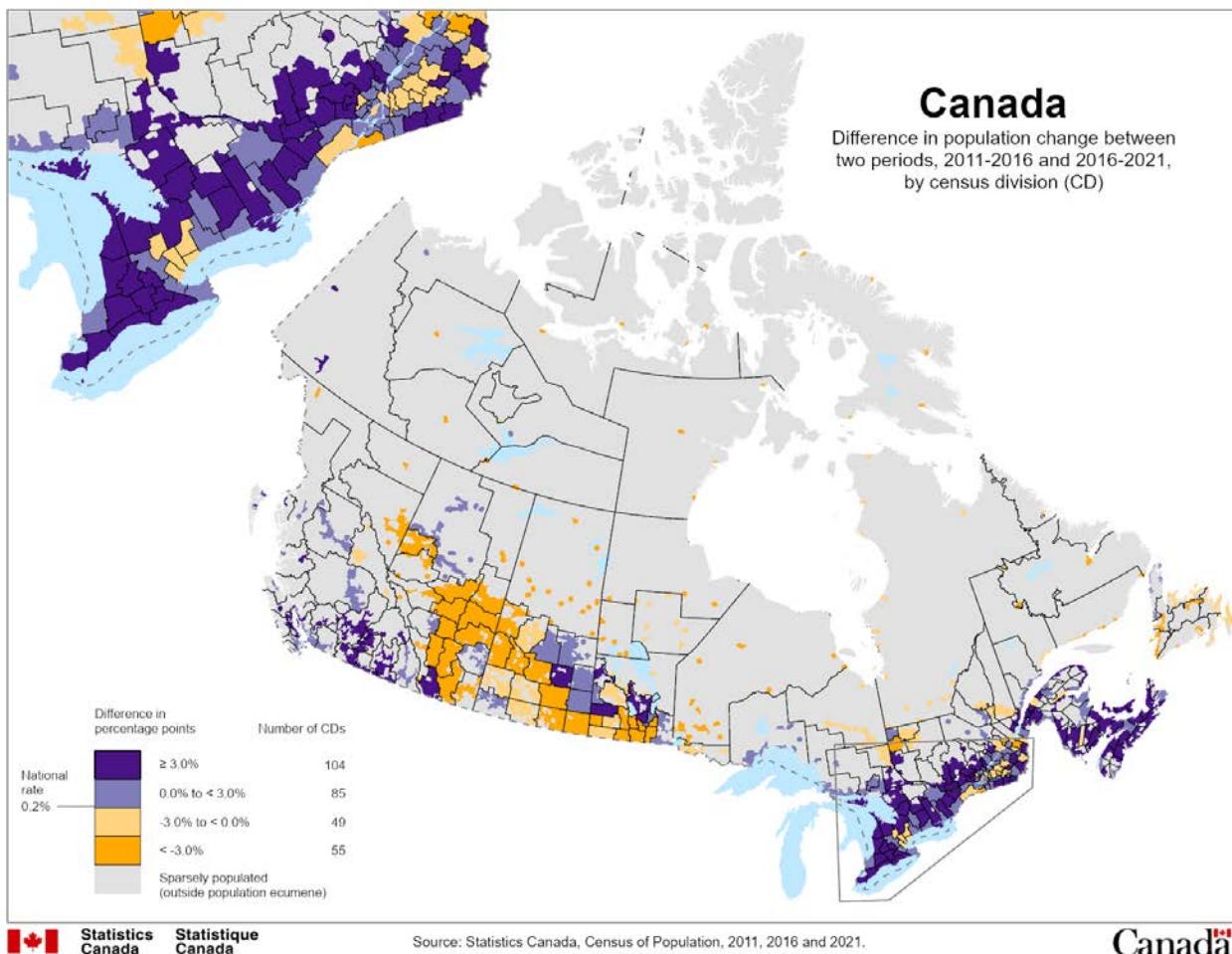
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Appendix

[Table 1.1 Geographic areas by province and territory, 2021 Census](#) from the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*

[Figure 1.1 Hierarchy of standard geographic areas for dissemination, Census 2021](#) from the *Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021*

